

SELF-HELP METHODS  
OF TEACHING  
ENGLISH

*Wohlfarth*



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H. G. Paul

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# SELF-HELP METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

*A GUIDE AND ALLY FOR TEACHERS OF  
ELEMENTARY ENGLISH*

BY JULIA H. WOHLFARTH

*Co-Author of  
Self-Help English Lessons, New-World Speller,  
Everyday Words*



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# WORLD BOOK COMPANY

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THE HOUSE OF APPLIED KNOWLEDGE

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Believing that any contribution to the teacher's equipment that will enable her to improve the quality of her English instruction will necessarily exert a beneficent influence on the entire work of the school, the publishers send out this book with confidence that it will play a helpful part in aiding our schools more nearly to approach the standards society is setting for them

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## FOREWORD

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It has been said that in our schools there are as many types of teachers as there are types of pupils. This book was written with a sincere desire to help in some degree all sorts and conditions of teachers and teachers-to-be. For the well-trained, experienced teacher it aims to suggest attitudes of mind and methods of procedure that will supplement her ideals and practice. For the young, inexperienced, or untrained teacher it hopes to prove a sane, reliable guide that will broaden her horizon and enable her to avoid pitfalls while experience and special study are gradually giving her the vision and the skill for a more independent steering of her course. For the students in teacher-training classes it strives to provide stimulating matter for thought and discussion. And finally, for teachers everywhere who meet at regular intervals for mutual help and encouragement, the book seeks to offer a basis for the definite, systematic, and constructive study of the problems involved in fostering that most social of all activities — the use of language as a means of communication.

15 N45 9 H. G. Paul  
After attending a course of lectures on English instruction, a young teacher plaintively remarked, "The lectures were very interesting, and the principles discussed were very important, but at the close of the course I knew little more about putting the principles into practice than I did before hearing the lectures." It was probably not a part of the lecturer's purpose in that course to discuss specific methods of teaching, but the young teacher's perplexity reveals the necessity of bridging the gap, by no means narrow, between general principles and the mode of their application. Because of this need, and because in any case theory is far in advance of practice, this book is dedicated to the task of considering the teaching of English from the standpoint of actual class-



room procedure. If it succeeds in giving the kind of help that will enable an ambitious teacher to improve the quality of her instruction, the purpose of the book will be achieved.

At no time is an author more humbly conscious of indebtedness to others than when attempting to express it. Since it is impossible to mention by name all who either directly or indirectly aided in preparing this book, its author takes this opportunity to express her gratitude to the following groups of persons: the scores of teachers in thirteen states, representing every section of the country, who contributed thousands of children's compositions for an exhaustive study of the outstanding composition needs of our schools; the many personal friends in the supervising and teaching ranks who have kept her in closest touch with their English work; the critics whose suggestions on all or on parts of the manuscript added significantly to the worth of the book; and — perhaps most of all — those leaders of educational thought whose inspiring and scholarly work lights the way for all serious students of education. The author believes that there can be no better way of paying her debt to these friends and these great leaders than by passing on to others some of the help and inspiration she has derived from them.

J. H. W.

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# SELF-HELP METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE BOOK AND HOW TO USE IT

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

The significance of the title. The title "Self-Help Methods of Teaching English" indicates that learning is a self-help process, and that only the kind of training that results in the self-help type of response recognizes the full significance of the word *teaching*. So far from cultivating a narrow type of individualism, self-help affords the only certain approach to the highest type of socialized activity.

The general purpose of the book. As intimated in the Foreword, it is the purpose of this book to help teachers to improve their classroom procedure in English. This is a sufficiently comprehensive aim to demand all the space the book affords. The inclusion of chapters devoted to the psychological laws underlying principles of teaching, and to a more or less abstract discussion of these principles, would result in a book so general in its nature that it would afford a minimum amount of the kind of help it seeks to give. The scope of the book is therefore limited in the following ways:

1. The book contains no lessons in psychology, and no knowledge of psychology is necessary for its successful use.

2. It discusses principles of teaching only in direct connection with their application to concrete problems.

3. It is limited to important phases of English work directly concerned with expression by means of words; that is, to oral and written composition. No attempt is made fully to cover the ground. It is hoped, however, that the methods advocated may prove suggestive in dealing with topics that are necessarily omitted.

4. It is mainly limited to the grades in which a textbook is commonly used — grades three to nine inclusive. In order, however, to



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give some useful hints to first- and second-grade teachers, and to show teachers of the following grades what foundation for their work is presupposed, one chapter is devoted to the first steps in composition.

5. No arguments are adduced to support the emphasis on oral composition and the advocacy of motivation, a social atmosphere and practice, and the self-help attitude. It is assumed that these fundamental matters are no longer debatable, and consequently their acceptance by all readers is taken for granted.

6. Finally, the book is not concerned with teaching under conditions not yet commonly realized. No attempt is made to suggest methods still largely ideal. Before these can be adopted, or even clearly formulated, there must be significant changes in our schools. Teachers must be better trained; curricula must be simpler, more unified, and more courageously relegated to their proper place; classes must be smaller; and equipment must be more extensive, less rigidly installed, and more adaptable to use through the pupil's initiative. This book seeks to *help teachers under generally existing conditions*.

**A summary.** To summarize, it is the purpose of this book to help teachers of English, with or without a knowledge of psychology, immediately to improve their instruction in oral and written composition by using simple and thoroughly tested methods applicable anywhere under present conditions.

### THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

**Treatment of subject matter.** Since the English work of the various grades is determined largely by courses of study prepared by local supervising officials of one rank or another, this book does not outline a grade-by-grade course of study. All subject matter is treated topically, each topic being developed in a simple, progressive way. Important topics appear again and again in their various relationships, thus emphasizing the unity of the English work.

**The Index.** The Index is an indispensable feature of the book. With its help every topic can be fully studied in its relation to other phases of composition work.

**The bibliographies.** The bibliographies are designed to help the teacher who wishes to do further reading. The aim has been merely to list a few books and articles that have proved helpful to many teachers.

**The questions and suggestions at the ends of chapters.** The questions and suggestions appearing at the ends of chapters are intended to stimulate thought and discussion.

#### HOW TO USE THE BOOK

**Individual study of the book.** The boy who found among his Christmas gifts a small dictionary and proceeded to read it from cover to cover was making a futile effort to secure from his new tool all possible aid. A book of methods is in one sense a tool, and, like a dictionary, a hammer, a needle, or a mowing machine, it should be used in the way it is best qualified to serve. Here are a few suggestions for the effective use of this particular tool.

If you are seeking immediate aid in solving a perplexing problem, take the following steps:

1. Read the Foreword in order to understand the purpose of the book; the Contents to discover in a general way what the book contains; and the preceding part of this chapter so that you will realize the scope of the book.

2. Go over the Index carefully to find out in greater detail what the book contains, and also how the matter is organized. If the book is your own, check topics that excite your immediate interest because of their relation to problems you are trying to solve.

3. Select a topic in which you need help, and look it up in the Index. For instance, if you are having difficulty in leading your pupils to talk freely about a picture they are studying and to give orally a short story about it, look up *Story-Telling*. Scan the sub-topics until you reach the words *from pictures*. Look up one by one the references following these words, and study them carefully. Give special attention to the lessons worked out as illustrations.

Now take a picture, imagine your class before you, and plan a lesson. Keep in mind your aims, formulate clearly the questions you will ask, and anticipate the answers your pupils may give.

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Build up in imagination the entire lesson, remembering at every step that it is your purpose to train your pupils to tell the story, and not to tell it yourself.

If you follow this plan with several pictures, you will be astonished to find how rapidly will grow your skill in questioning, your power to lead your pupils without doing their work for them, and your interest in your work.

4. Use the book in the same way for other topics. At every point utilize also the suggestions of your course of study; all help given you by principal or supervisor; and above all, the results of your own thought and experience.

If you wish to study the entire subject in a progressive way rather than to plunge at the outset into a specific problem, the following suggestions may help you :

1. Take steps 1 and 2 as recommended on page 3.
2. Take up one chapter at a time, following the order of the book. Read the chapter as a whole. Read it again, this time topically. In connection with each topic, look up and study thoughtfully all Index references to the matter concerned. If you have other books of method at hand, look up the subject in these, and try to recall all that experience or earlier study has taught you regarding it. Study the suggestions and questions at the close of the chapter, and think them through to a finish.

When you have finished the chapter, formulate clearly, but as concisely as possible, the few outstanding facts that seem to you absolutely essential to improved teaching of each topic under consideration, and enter them in a notebook for future reference.

Formulate your aims in terms of accomplishment by the pupil. What language habits, what skills, what knowledge underlying habits and skills, should result from your teaching of the subject you have been studying? Try to determine to what extent these aims have been attained in the past, and in what degree you have failed to achieve them. Seek for the causes of failures, and in the light of your study plan in detail what you will do at once to improve your instruction in the phase of composition work you have been considering.

3. The same plan may be followed with succeeding chapters, or a plan modified from time to time in accordance with your own expanding ideas and ideals.



Perhaps it is unnecessary to say that the kind of specific study outlined should be supplemented by study that will result in a knowledge of the principles that underlie all teaching. Try to secure and to study at least one or two of the books listed at the end of this chapter, and as time goes on, some of the books relating more specifically to the teaching of English. Every teacher, if possible, — certainly every school, — should own several of these books as a nucleus of a working library of professional literature.

**Group study of the book.** If you happen to be teaching in a one-room school, you will have no opportunity for group study. If, on the other hand, you are within reach of other teachers also interested in composition-teaching problems, you will find group study invaluable. It affords an opportunity to discuss problems with others also engaged in their solution; to get help and to give help; to compare results and work out standards that are reliable; and to cultivate the enthusiasm and the sane competition that community work always stimulates. It also affords an opportunity for principals and supervisors, occasionally at least, to study with the teachers whose work they direct, contributing the results of their wider knowledge and experience.

Here are a few suggestions for group study:

1. In preparation for group study follow the suggestions given under points 1 and 2 on page 3.

2. At the first meeting decide how often you will come together, and select the most convenient day and hour. Plan to attend the meetings regularly, offering no excuse for absence that would not justify absence from school.

3. Organize by electing a chairman and a secretary. Discuss the way in which you will use the book. Shall you take up the subjects in the order in which they occur in the book, or shall you select some topic that at the moment seems to be of special importance in your schools? Definitely choose the topic for the next meeting.

4. Before the following meeting, each teacher should study the chosen topic as fully as possible, and come prepared to report both

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her difficulties and her success. Come prepared to ask questions and to answer them.

5. The leader may open the meeting by giving briefly some incident from her own experience that will serve to emphasize the importance of the topic to be considered, or she may adopt any other plan that will seem helpful. With books open, outline the matter studied and discuss it frankly and freely. Give special attention to difficulties propounded by any teacher. At the close of the discussion, the leader, or a teacher previously appointed by her for the purpose, may summarize the discussion, emphasizing the points that seem of vital importance in securing improved work.

6. Select a phase of composition work that all will try to improve before the following meeting, when results should be reported.

7. Assign the subject for the next meeting, and adjourn.

This is but one way of conducting group study, but it is a simple way that has been found effective. As a rule, the less formal the meeting, the more helpful it will be. It need scarcely be said that the best method of conducting group study is the method that grows out of the experiences of the group concerned. The method suggested may serve to set the ball in motion.

Whatever manner of conducting group study is ultimately adopted, the following suggestions will prove helpful. All have been fruitful of valuable results, and introduced from time to time, they will serve to furnish the variety that teachers, no less than pupils, need in order to keep alive a healthy interest in the work at hand.

1. If the topic under discussion relates to written composition, bring specimens of the children's work, good, bad, and average. These papers should be carefully compared and put in charge of the secretary or of a committee, to be available for study at any time. Eventually such a collection of papers studied in a comparative way will serve as a means of arriving at reliable standards. See Chapter Eleven.

2. If possible, occasionally have a teacher bring her class to the meeting and give a demonstration lesson, the lesson to be discussed after the pupils are dismissed. This exercise will prove invaluable

to the inexperienced teacher, and will afford the skilled teacher a rich opportunity for social service.

3. Use committees as a means of doing concentrated work. For instance, it is sometimes a good plan to devote a meeting to the answering of miscellaneous questions, the questions being dropped from time to time into a box maintained for the purpose. At the meeting preceding the one to be devoted to this exercise, the questions should be classified and distributed, each group of related questions being assigned to a committee whose duty it will be thoroughly to investigate the subject concerned. At the appointed time, each committee should bring in a report that will be well organized and incorporate the best thought available on the problem. Such reports should be as brief as is consistent with clearness, so that time may remain for discussion.

4. Committees may be used at all times to form a connecting link between this book and other more technical books. For instance, if the subject of projects were under discussion, a committee would do valuable work by reporting on some standard treatise such as Professor Kilpatrick's classic pamphlet, "The Project Method," or some other work. This would tend to stimulate further study that would be broadening and that would result in a fuller comprehension of the "why" of many methods that are recommended in various books.

5. In all discussions guard against too hasty generalization. Do not accept unquestioningly statements made in this or in other books, or statements made by teachers, even though they are given as facts. Many will be unquestioned, but others will be challenged. This is as it should be. When a doubt attaches to a statement of principle or of procedure, consider the statement as a hypothesis. It will then serve as the starting point for investigation. Whatever the ultimate verdict, the investigation will be worth while if the matter concerned is important enough to have been challenged.

6. Occasionally devote a meeting to the study of the adopted textbook. With definite aims set before the group as goals of attainment, determine how the textbook can best be used to secure the desired results. Give special attention to methods of training pupils in the independent use of the book.

In closing this chapter, a word of caution regarding the too close limitation of study groups may not be amiss. In some places it is the custom to conduct meetings that bring

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together all teachers of one particular grade. This practice is sometimes wise, because some problems are limited fairly closely to children of a given age. The practice may well be questioned, however, in connection with such study as has been under consideration in this chapter.

The teacher who limits her study to the work of her own grade will often fail to base the activities of her pupils on what has preceded, and she will get no inspiration and practical suggestion from the work for which her own is the foundation. While it is natural that a teacher of the third grade devote more attention to the details of third-grade teaching than to the details of first- or sixth- or eighth-grade English work, she should be familiar with the English problems of all grades in a general way. For this reason, it seems desirable that English problems be studied by the teachers of all grades together, at least until each teacher has broadened her horizon sufficiently to include a sympathetic and comprehending view of the subject as a whole.

### FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Having in mind a considerable number of your pupils, what do you consider the weakest feature of their language work at the present time?
2. In your judgment, is the weakness due to a poor foundation laid in earlier grades, to some lack in your own teaching, to excessive requirements in the course of study, to a lack of interest on the part of the pupils, to some cause not suggested, or to several or all of these circumstances?
3. Why is it necessary to discover the cause of individual or class weakness?
4. The primary weakness and its cause being determined, what plan shall you make for starting the work of reconstruction?
5. What harmful results to the pupil may result from further delay?



## BOOKS FOR READING AND STUDY

The following books are recommended, because they will help to give the general insight that will make possible self-help teaching in all subjects. The books suggested for reading in later chapters are recommended almost without exception because of the inspiration and help they will afford in teaching English.

BAGLEY. *The Educative Process*. The Macmillan Company.

COLVIN. *The Learning Process*. The Macmillan Company.

DEWEY. *New Schools for Old*. E. P. Dutton & Co.

EARHART. *Types of Teaching*. Houghton Mifflin Company.

JAMES. *Talks to Teachers*. Henry Holt & Co.

McMURRY. *Elementary School Standards*. World Book Company.

MERIAM. *Child Life and the Curriculum*. World Book Company.

PARKER. *Teaching the Elementary Subjects*. Ginn & Co.

STRAYER AND NORSWORTHY. *How to Teach*. The Macmillan Company.

THORNDIKE. *The Principles of Teaching*. A. G. Seiler.

— *Educational Psychology: Briefer Course*. Teachers College, Columbia University.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FIRST STEPS IN COMPOSITION

#### THE FOUNDATION

**The pre-school foundation.** The first-grade teacher of several decades ago began her year's work with the conviction that she was to deal with a child whose mind was a blank page on which she could write at will. The teacher of today knows that the first-grade newcomer, whether entering directly from the home or from the kindergarten, for several years has diligently been doing his own writing. Under a corps of active teachers, — his human and material environment; his sense-aroused curiosity and irresistible urge to activity; and his physical appetites and social instincts, — he has acquired a larger stock of ideas and more spontaneous habits of self-expression than he will ever again accumulate in an equal period of time. He is, in fact, something of a veteran.

**The basic problem.** The basic problem, therefore, is the intelligent appraisal of the child's pre-school acquisitions in order to insure continued growth under the new conditions. What are some of the important language powers revealed by a study of the earliest stage of his education? Here are a few :

1. *He has learned to talk.* For several years the child has made known his wants and desires by means of words; he has exchanged ideas with his family and with playmates; and he has prattled at length about his little pleasures, belongings, and experiences, sometimes with no great concern for the impression he was making, if only he gained a sympathetic ear. Often his chattering has been almost as completely a bodily matter as are the gambols and hand-springs that drain off his superfluous physical energy. But he has discovered that language is a means of communication, and he has used this convenient tool freely and without self-consciousness, and for more or less conscious purposes.

2. *He has something original to talk about.* Whatever the immediate purpose of his spoken words, back of them is a mass of ideas gained through his alert senses.

3. *He has a stock of English habits.* Some of them are good, and many of them are bad. All were gained through imitation.

4. *He has a vocabulary,* usually adequate to his needs. This vocabulary may contain many hundreds of words.

5. *He has a well-developed tendency to express his ideas.* Whatever source they were derived, he expresses them either words or actions.

**The dangers of the situation.** Too often the school suddenly and violently checks the child's progress. Instead of remaining a natural means of communicating his own ideas, language becomes to the pupil a means of saying something that originated outside himself. Instead of discovering new facts, as of old, he has the shadows of ideas doled out to him. He is told what to talk about, and what to do and how to do it, frequently without any apparent motive. *Expression in words is no longer self-expression.* It simply becomes a feature of the daily grind. An immediate and deplorable result is the loss of interest and the development of self-consciousness. Originality and the budding thought-habit vanish.

**A remedy suggested.** In order to avoid these dangers, and at the same time to provide for growth in language power, two lines of language work are necessary :

1. The first kind may be termed *informal conversation*. It is concerned with preserving the spontaneity of the pre-school period, while broadening the interests of the children and socializing them. While accuracy of sentence form and word usage is by no means neglected, it is never allowed to interfere with freedom of thought and expression.

2. The second type of language work may be termed *oral composition*, the term *composition* implying that special attention is given to the way in which thoughts are expressed.

The conversation type of language work will begin on the first day of school, but oral composition will be introduced



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only when the pupil has had enough school experience to make it certain that he can give some attention to his sentences and to his choice of words without losing sight of the thoughts he is trying to express.

### INFORMAL CONVERSATION

**Introduction.** Every school exercise that requires the use of words as a means of expression becomes an informal language lesson. If the teacher appreciates this fact and seizes her opportunity, the children's vocabulary and power to express themselves in clear, concise English will grow normally along with their expanding interests.

Assuming that the teacher is alive to the situation, no special conversation lessons are necessary. The morning talks; the discussion incident to reading, nature, and number lessons; the conversation demanded by constructive work of all kinds; and the give and take of ideas in carrying on class projects, all provide opportunities for the best kind of language practice. And while the teacher is definitely holding before herself as one of her aims the cultivation of the children's language, the children have a more immediate purpose that insures the same free use of language as on the playground or on the homeward way.

**Practical suggestions for informal language training.** *Create as far as possible the free, home atmosphere.* The children will then lose the feeling of being under strange conditions, and will talk as readily as they do outside of school. This is difficult in a large room with fixed furniture, but it can be done, and often has been done. Banish all restrictions that are not necessary to preserve the rights of all. Even though the class be large, frequently gather the entire flock about you for an intimate talk. Ask them about their brothers and sisters, their toys, the games they like to play, and any of their other interests. Let them bring things

that interest them, and talk about these. Tell them about things that you enjoyed when you were a child. Tell them stories in your best manner; play simple games with them. When you have succeeded in loosening the tongue of even the most diffident, you will have overcome the most serious obstacle to free conversation.

*Make language improvement your chief aim during at least one period each day.* Sometimes it will be the construction period, sometimes the period preparatory to reading, sometimes the nature period. Plan carefully for this lesson so that you will secure a maximum of expression from the children. Sometimes have each child tell at least one thing about the subject under discussion. At other times do not try to have all in a large class participate. The point is to have all talk as much as possible without making the work stilted or artificial.

*Train the children to ask questions.* Too many teachers ask questions that had better be asked by the pupils. For instance, imagine that a child has been relating some personal experience — attending a party, visiting a circus, playing a game, or the like. Is it better in such a case for the teacher to ask further questions to draw out the child, or to say to the class, “If there is anything else you would like to have Jennie tell about, you may ask her questions”?

There is no school exercise that does not afford opportunities for questioning. When the lesson is well under way, encourage the children to ask questions. If they go too far afield, the teacher has an opportunity to train them to stick to the matter in hand; if they ask pertinent questions, they are having excellent training in thinking and in expressing. Both are essential language activities.

*Make expression in words the servant of all other activities.* For example, a class is planning to make a picture book to send at Christmas to a hospital or other place. The pupils

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are to decide for themselves how large the book is to be; whether paper or cloth shall be used for the leaves; whether black-and-white or colored pictures, or both, shall be used; and all other details. They are to look over their own picture books for suggestions, and, if they choose, bring them to school to show to the rest of the class.

If the children are wide awake, there will be differences of opinion. One child will favor a large book, while another will prefer a smaller one. Each child must be allowed to give his opinion and be required to back it with good reasons. Eventually a definite size must be agreed upon, but before this is possible, some one must succeed in convincing his classmates that his ideas are best. This makes necessary a clear argument, and the project therefore gives the teacher the opportunity to work for clear, accurate language, not primarily for the sake of the language, but because without it the matter under discussion could not be satisfactorily settled. The more highly socialized the school life, the more free, natural, and purposeful will become communication by means of language.

Construction projects are particularly valuable for developing language power because they offer so rich an opportunity for worth-while conversation. Read Chapter Ten for additional suggestions.

*Let your own language at all times be a model of clear, simple, forceful English.* This is, of course, a prime essential, since language is learned largely through imitation. Some of the pupils may not hear much English at home, and many may hear only incorrect English. It is therefore important that the teacher set a watch on her own lips. Unless the use of good English at all times has become habitual, she should consciously cultivate the habit, not only when telling stories but whenever she speaks.

No mistake should be made as to what the term "good



English " means. A critic teacher in a normal school once told a student after a practice lesson in first-grade reading that her English was poor, and that she should not call on the children in a regular order. Of course, the critic was in fault in not citing definite instances of poor English, as was proved on the following day. The young teacher-to-be began her second lesson by saying to her class, " Today I shall call on you promiscuously and very frequently ; that will necessitate what on your part ? " Naturally it necessitated an uncomprehending stare. Note the adjectives *clear, simple, forceful*, at the beginning of the preceding paragraph.

*Be on the alert to note English errors made by the pupils at any time.* This does not imply that each error must be corrected at the time it is made, for this would often interrupt the stream of thought, and do more harm than good. But without distracting the child's attention from what he is trying to communicate, the teacher may remark, " It is better to say —," and have the correct form given. Or the teacher may remark, " People usually say —," and have the suggested form repeated by the child who made the error.

When immediate correction is not attempted, the teacher should make a mental note of the error, and later record it in a notebook kept for the purpose. After a week or two, the errors most frequently made may first be given attention, games being a useful form of drill. For this kind of corrective work, see Chapter Four.

*Train your pupils at all times to stand erect when speaking; in general to face the audience as in real life; to use a pleasing, well-controlled voice audible to every one in the room; and to pronounce all words accurately and distinctly.* These matters are of vital importance, but too often they are relegated to the language lesson and neglected at other times. See Chapter Four for suggestions on voice training.

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The importance of projects in the first and second grades. The language value of a project has already been emphasized in connection with the making of a Christmas picture book. Some other projects that have been used successfully in the primary grades are the following: planning and making a toy shop, afterward used as an aid in developing number relations; making a farm on the sand table; dramatizing stories; planning a Hallowe'en party; planting seeds, and watching and reporting their development; making books of various sorts; playing Mother Goose.

If the children decide what they will do, plan all the steps, and carry out their plans in such a way that their purpose is accomplished, not only will they have an opportunity for free discussion, but they cannot get along without it.

At the close of this chapter, several references are given to books or articles that afford help in training children to work by projects. All give concrete illustrations, and will prove valuable to all grade teachers.

### ORAL COMPOSITION

**The purpose of composition lessons.** It has sometimes been urged that since language is the universal medium of expression, no language lessons as such are necessary, the other activities of the school affording ample opportunity for the required training. Possibly under ideal conditions with ideal teachers, and perhaps ideal pupils, the argument would be sound. The plan has been tried, however, again and again, with disappointing results. It is now generally conceded that a more rapid growth in language power results under a system providing for lessons whose main aim is the mastery of the technique that is to be applied in all situations requiring the use of language.

**Significance of the word "composition."** Whenever a person combines two or more words to express a thought, he

is *composing*, or, in other words, he is *making a composition*. The word *composition* is here used, however, to indicate two or more related sentences on a given subject. The word *story* may be considered a synonym of *composition*, and may be used with the youngest children.

**When to begin oral composition.** Oral composition may be begun when the children have had sufficient school experience to overcome native shyness, to work happily and without self-consciousness in the social group, and to talk freely and to some purpose in carrying on school activities. The middle of the first-grade year often finds all conditions satisfactory for the beginning of the lessons.

**Aims.** In the first and second grades, the teacher's ultimate aim is to train the pupils to use language correctly and effectively in all the ordinary situations of life.

The teacher's immediate aim is to train the children to tell an interesting story of a few short sentences in simple, correct English, and with some degree of spontaneity and pleasure in the telling.

The children's aim is to interest their classmates, or other audience, by telling a story as well as they can tell it. This social motive is easily established. After telling the children an old favorite, or an enticing new story, the teacher asks them if they enjoyed the story, and then suggests that they learn to tell stories so that they can give pleasure to others. A majority of children respond eagerly to this suggestion.

The first work should be very simple, and a direct outgrowth of previous training.

#### A TYPICAL COMPOSITION LESSON

A first lesson might be conducted as follows. Bear in mind that the pupils for several months have been talking freely about a wide variety of interests, and have had much unconscious language training.

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*Teacher:* When I was a little girl, I had a pet dog that could walk on his hind legs. He always did it when he heard music. How many of you have a dog?

(The children who have dogs respond in the usual way, and the teacher addresses one who is a ready talker. This starts the lesson with desirable promptness.)

*Teacher:* My dog's name was Carlo. What is your dog's name, Mary?

*Mary:* My dog's name is Radio.

*Teacher:* Is Radio a large dog?

*Mary:* No, Miss Drew, Radio is just a little puppy.

*Teacher:* Would some one like to ask Mary a question about Radio?

*Pupil:* Has Radio any tricks? (This question was undoubtedly suggested by the teacher's reference to the trick performed by her dog. Incidentally, this was the teacher's motive in making the reference.)

*Mary:* He hides when he has been naughty.

*Pupil:* Where does he hide?

*Mary:* He hides behind the phonograph.

*Teacher:* What naughty thing does Radio do? (The teacher resumes the questioning in order to recall the attention of the class to the trick phase of the story.)

*Mary:* Sometimes he chews Father's slipper.

*Teacher:* Radio must be a very cunning little puppy. If you put together what you have told us about Radio's trick, it will make a story. (To the entire class:) How many of you would like to hear the story?

(The class indicates its wishes, and the teacher proceeds.)

*Teacher:* Suppose you tell us who Radio is, what naughty thing he sometimes does, and what happens then.

(After Mary has thought for a moment, she tells the following story:)

*Mary:* Radio is our little puppy. Sometimes he chews Father's slipper. Then he runs away and hides.

*Teacher:* Mary has told us a little story about her dog. It is good enough to be written on the blackboard. Then we will all read it.

(The teacher writes the story on the blackboard, perhaps remarking as she begins each sentence, "I shall begin this sentence with a



capital letter." As she makes the period at the close of each sentence, she says, "This dot shows that this is the end of the sentence." The class reads the story and the lesson continues.)

*Teacher:* Has any one a kitten for a pet? (Some one is sure to respond to this question, and the teacher continues.) Tom, what does your kitten like to do?

*Tom:* She likes to play with a spool of thread.

*Teacher:* Please tell your story so that it will show who "she" is.

*Tom:* (After further questioning, if necessary.) My kitten likes to play with a spool of thread.

*Teacher:* What sometimes happens to the thread?

*Tom:* Sometimes the thread gets all snarled up.

*Teacher:* Tom, you have told us two things about your kitten. Tell them once more.

*Tom:* My kitten likes to play with a spool of thread. Sometimes the thread gets all snarled up.

*Teacher:* How many of you think that Tom's story is good enough to be put on the blackboard? (The children will certainly think so, and indicate the fact.)

(The teacher writes the story on the blackboard, making the capitals and the periods very deliberately, or again directly calling attention to them. The children read the story. If there is time, several other stories may be developed in the same way.)

*Teacher:* Now that we are going to be story-tellers, shall we have our stories written in a book?

(The children invariably approve of this suggestion. After they decide that they cannot yet write well enough to make the book themselves, the teacher offers to write the stories, or, better still, suggests that a pupil in a higher grade would be very glad to write them. A messenger is sent to make the request, and brings back the answer. The teacher provides sheets of paper, and at some convenient time the higher-grade pupil copies the stories. Incidentally the storybook motivates learning to write well so that the children can make their own books.)

Lessons of the sort described may be continued for a number of days, and after the work is well under way, it will proceed much more quickly than at first.

When the book is finished, preferably when each child has

contributed a story, the sheets will be fastened together, and the children will make some sort of cover for it, all making suggestions and agreeing upon the best one. If there is an art teacher, her coöperation should be enlisted on request of the pupils themselves. The class will then decide how the book will be used. Some of the uses sure to be suggested are showing it to the principal, to the pupil who copied the stories, and to the parents at home; and lending it to other grades. The book should then be preserved for comparison with later stories.

Simple as this kind of story-telling is, the lessons may not proceed smoothly. If they did, they would be unnecessary. The children will not always respond in sentences, and then additional questioning is necessary to secure the sentence form of reply. They will make errors that must be corrected, and possibly noted for special drill. Often they will join their sentences with the word *and* when giving the entire story. When this happens, it is usually sufficient at this stage to ask the story-teller to tell only one thing at a time, calling attention to the way the sentences were written on the blackboard. Implant the idea of expressing each thought separately.

**The function of the first story-telling.** While the stories for the book were told by individual children about their pets, they were not, strictly speaking, original stories. Note that the teacher selected the subjects and drew out the content of the stories by questions. The purpose of this kind of work is to launch the story-telling without hitches, and to produce stories at the outset that will be satisfactory. The power to tell stories in this way gives the children confidence in themselves, and incidentally they are setting up standards that will be of great help when they begin to tell genuinely original stories. They also unconsciously imbibe the single-phase idea, thus getting their first lesson in this

important matter, and they have practice in expressing each thought in its own sentence.

**By-products of the story-telling.** Making the storybook will motivate some valuable lessons in good manners. Often children themselves suggest that they thank the pupil who copied the stories and the art teacher who helped make the cover for the book. When this does not happen, a hint from the teacher is usually sufficient to precipitate a discussion on how the thanks shall be conveyed. If sending notes is suggested, all may help plan them. The teacher may write them if at the time no pupil is able to copy them from the blackboard.

See "Written Language" for further suggestions on the note writing.

**The second step in story-telling.** The class story represents a step in advance. A common interest is selected for the subject, and the children pool their ideas and decide for themselves what shall be put into the story. This exercise builds on the foundation laid by the story lesson already described, and at the same time prepares for the following step — original story-telling by individual children.

The class story shows the children how to handle their material, and is particularly helpful to the unimaginative and unresponsive children who need special training before entering upon their independent story-telling careers.

A picture provides good material for the first class story. It was formerly the custom to use in this picture work reproductions of masterpieces, but teachers have long since discovered that for the special purpose of story-telling in the lowest grades, more modern pictures of familiar child or animal activities are better, because they can be interpreted in the light of the children's own experience.

A suitable picture at this stage is one that depicts a single interesting episode and contains little distracting detail. If

it is colored, so much the better. Suitable pictures may sometimes be found on the covers of children's magazines and in the better type of picture book. With the children's help, every school should collect a stock of these pictures.

If possible, the picture should be large enough to be easily seen by all when displayed before the class. If a smaller one is necessarily used, it should be passed around and time enough allowed each child or small group of children to enable them to grasp the story of the picture and to hold in mind the essential details.

#### A TYPICAL PICTURE LESSON

Let us imagine that the picture on the opposite page is to be used.

**Aims.** The aims of the teacher are to help the children to realize that a picture tells a story, and to train them to read the story and tell it in words.

The pupils' aim is to learn to tell the story well so that they can tell it in an interesting way at home.

**The teacher's preparation.** The teacher should know the picture so well that she can ask questions without constantly turning to look at it. She should plan carefully the questions she will ask, and anticipate the answers they may elicit. She will then be ready for the bypaths into which the discussion may be led, and will not be disturbed by interruption of her carefully laid plan. She must be ready tactfully to cut short all side excursions that lead away from the goal, while utilizing any unexpected suggestion that is pertinent. In other words, she makes a lesson plan, not for the purpose of imposing it upon the class, but to acquire skill in holding the pupils to their purpose and in encouraging them to do for themselves all that they possibly can.

The lesson might proceed somewhat as follows, after the children have examined the picture to their hearts' content.





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Note that the teacher does not begin the actual story-telling in the first lesson. The preliminary discussion will help the class to read the picture and to get into sympathy with the story it tells. When they have had some experience in reading pictures, the children themselves can help ask the questions.

*Teacher:* This picture was made by an artist. He had a story to tell you, but instead of telling it in words, as I tell you stories, he told it in a picture. Let us read the picture and find out what the story is. Then we will tell it in words, and you will be ready to tell it at home. How many of you like the picture?

(The children manifest their approval in characteristic ways, and the lesson proceeds.)

*Teacher:* A story always tells about somebody or something. What is this story about?

*Pupil:* About a boy and girl.

*Teacher:* Please tell your whole thought. Begin "The story is about —"

*Pupil:* The story is about a boy and a girl.

*Pupil:* It is about a dog, too.

*Teacher:* Yes, it tells about three little playmates. Let us give them names.

(After a good many suggestions are made, the class agrees upon these names: Fannie, Dick, and Spot.)

*Teacher:* What are the children playing?

*Pupil:* They are playing ball.

*Teacher:* Who threw the ball?

*Pupil:* Fannie threw the ball.

*Pupil:* Dick threw it.

*Teacher:* How many of you think Dick threw it? (Many hands are raised.) How do you know?

*Pupil:* His hands show it.

*Pupil:* He looks like a pitcher.

*Pupil:* That's the way I throw a ball.

*Teacher:* (Passing a ball, or something to represent one, to the last speaker.) Throw this ball and we will all notice if your hands look like Dick's.

(The pupil throws the ball, and the point is settled.)

*Teacher:* How does Fannie show that Dick threw the ball?

*Pupil:* She is going to catch it.

*Pupil:* Her hands is held to catch it.

*Teacher:* It is better to say "Her hands *are* held to catch it."  
(The teacher makes a mental note of the error and later gives an *is* and *are* drill.)

*Pupil:* Her hands are held to catch it.

*Pupil:* She couldn't throw a ball that way.

*Teacher:* No, Fannie was ready to catch the ball. Did she catch it?

*Pupil:* (Laughing.) No, Miss Adams, Spot caught it.

*Teacher:* Do you think the children wanted Spot to play? (Some nod, and others dissent.)

*Pupil:* I think Fannie wanted him to play.

*Teacher:* Why do you think so?

*Pupil:* Because she is laughing.

*Teacher:* It is not a good plan to begin a sentence with *because*. Try to tell what you think in one sentence.

*Pupil:* I think Fannie wanted him to play because she is laughing.

*Teacher:* Good! That is what I think. What about Dick?

*Pupil:* Dick looks cross.

*Pupil:* Dick is mad.

*Teacher:* It is better to say, "Dick is angry."

*Pupil:* Dick is angry.

*Pupil:* I don't think Dick is angry. He's just —

*Teacher:* Disappointed. Is that the word you are trying to think of?

*Pupil:* Yes, Miss Adams. I think Dick is disappointed.

*Teacher:* I think so, too. Perhaps when he sees how Fannie and Spot enjoy the fun, he will enjoy it, too. The picture does not tell the end of the story, but we can finish it to suit ourselves. What do you think Spot will do with the ball?

*Pupil:* He will run away with it.

*Pupil:* He will give it to Fannie. (The children's faces show that this suggestion is unpopular, and it is therefore dropped.)

*Teacher:* Let us imagine that he runs away with it. What will happen then?

*Pupil:* They will chase him.

*Teacher:* Who will chase him?

*Pupil:* The children will chase him.

*Teacher:* Who will tell it in a different way?

*Pupil:* Dick and Fannie will chase him.

*Pupil:* They will all have a race.

*Teacher:* Yes, I am sure that they will have a race. And now that we have read the picture story, we can tell it in words in our next lesson. We will leave the picture where you can see it.

#### TELLING THE STORY

*Teacher:* Today we are going to tell in words the story that the artist told in a picture. How many remember the story that we found in the picture?

(The children indicate that they remember the story.)

*Teacher:* Very well, then we will begin at once to tell the story. I will write it on the blackboard as you tell it. What shall you tell first?

*Pupil:* One day some children were playing ball.

*Pupil:* Dick threw a ball to Fannie.

*Pupil:* Spot wanted to play with Dick and Fannie.

*Pupil:* One day Dick and Fannie were playing ball.

*Teacher:* Which sentence shall we take?

(After some discussion, the last is chosen, and the teacher writes it on the blackboard.)

*Teacher:* What shall we tell next?

(After other suggestions not as good are rejected by the class.)

*Pupil:* Spot wanted to play with them.

(This sentence is accepted, and then the rest of the story is built up and written on the blackboard.)

One day Dick and Fannie were playing ball.

Spot wanted to play with them.

He caught the ball and ran away with it.

Dick was disappointed, but Fannie was glad.

Then they all had a race.

The story is now read aloud several times, and the children agree to tell it at home that evening.

Class stories will naturally be longer than the individual original stories discussed in the following section. This is but natural, and it is desirable. The teacher should refrain from putting her own ideas into the story. Try to get the best story that the children can produce without undue help,



and be satisfied with that. The pupils will improve, not by having their work done for them, but by well-directed practice. Keep the self-help aim always in sight.

**Suggestions and cautions.** Teachers sometimes begin a picture lesson with a direction to the children to tell all they see in the picture, and the children name everything portrayed. Note that in the lessons given, the teacher leads the pupils to talk only of those things that are concerned with the story the picture tells. Her questions lead them to think of the happenings in an orderly way. This is a good way to train children to read a picture. When they tell original stories later, they will be able to arrange the facts in their natural order.

Study the lesson with a view to seeing how much about story-telling was included, and how naturally the children responded to the teaching. Consider the purpose of the teacher's introduction; the incidental way in which she corrected mistakes; how she secured sentence responses; the orderliness of the questioning; how vocabulary growth was provided for; and how at the last the children were led to make some use of the story.

Finally, note that the story might have been improved by continued questioning. That this was not attempted is an indication of the teacher's wisdom. Her aim having been achieved, she did not spoil the lesson by attempting too much.

**A look ahead.** Pictures form but one source of material for class stories. Class experiences of all sorts may be used — games played at recess, visits to places in the neighborhood, the constructive activities of the class, short stories read, and the like. In dealing with material that is familiar to all the members of the class, it is wise to motivate the story-telling by preparing it for some other audience, as in the type lesson.

## TELLING ORIGINAL STORIES

**Introduction.** When the children have gained some skill in telling stories of the two types already considered, they will be ready to tell original stories. This marks a significant step in advance, because the children must now decide what to tell about, select the material for the story, and arrange the material in the best way without the help of the teacher.

**Motivating the story-telling.** All children like stories, and the teacher can easily lead the pupils to see how interesting it will be to listen to stories that nobody has heard before. Each child becomes a story-teller in turn, keeping his story a secret until the time comes to tell it to the class. In order that a large number may be told during a class period, the stories should be short, and in order that all may enjoy them, they must be told so that all can hear them easily.

**Choosing subjects.** There will always be children who think they have no interesting experiences to relate. Such children must be helped to see how much is happening all the time that is worth talking about. A second-grade boy once said that he had no story to tell. It happened that on the preceding day the teacher had passed the boy's house and had seen his little brother riding a goat. She asked him if he had ever ridden the goat, and when he admitted that he had done so, she suggested that he tell about the best ride he ever had. He recalled that he had once been thrown off the goat's back, and immediately produced an interesting story.

The children should be encouraged to tell about things they see on the way home from school, at market, or in other places; good times they have had, surprises that have fallen to their lot, and so on. After their eyes have been opened, they will be astonished to find what an interesting place this old world of ours is. Knowledge of the home conditions of her pupils gives a teacher an advantage that helps in many ways.

Framing titles is not an easy matter, and it seems wise in these earliest grades either to have the stories given without titles or to require simple statements, such as, "I am going to tell about the dime I lost." These statements later make the best approach to real titles. "The Dime I Lost" may be lifted bodily from the sentence.

**Telling the stories.** In all story-telling lessons, each child should realize that he will be busy every minute either as a story-teller or as a listener. It is a good plan to have the story-teller stand where all can see him. However, if a child is at first too diffident to be conspicuous and interesting at the same time, his temperament should be considered. Ordinarily there will be few of these children in a class after the kind of work already discussed has been carried on for several months. One little second-grade girl who lost her head under the eyes of her classmates, was allowed for a day or two to stand beside her desk, although some of the pupils could not see her. Then one day the teacher, who was at the side-front of the room, asked her to come to her. With the teacher's arm around her waist, she told her story. The next day she again stood at the teacher's side, but without the sheltering arm about her. Scarcely had her story begun when the teacher found it necessary — for the child's mental, not physical, good — to close a window. She rose quietly, closed the window, and then remained where she was until the story was finished. After that the child no longer feared the eyes of her audience.

**Criticizing the stories.** Teacher and pupils will together be the critics, the teacher's participation being limited to doing only what the children cannot do for themselves. From the outset the criticism should concern only a few features. At the start it is enough to answer the following questions about every story told:

Was the story interesting?

Did the story-teller stand well and speak distinctly?

The criticism should be addressed to the story-teller directly. A critic might say, for instance, after some training, "I think your story was very interesting. I could hear every word you said." Or, after a story in which a boy merely referred to a picnic, "I wish you had told us what happened at the picnic." Or, "I could not hear all that you said."

Of course there will be errors that the pupils do not notice, although after they have been drilled on a certain form, — *isn't* for example, — some children will quickly note the incorrect form and will refer to it when criticizing.

In whatever way a child tells his story, he should not be interrupted during the telling. It is a question whether every error should be corrected by the teacher. Certainly those that have been selected for correction in the grade should not be overlooked, and may be corrected after the story is finished. An occasional error that is not generally made in the class may well be disregarded for the time being unless it is flagrant. Some matters correct themselves as time goes on. Other errors may be so general that the teacher feels that the entire class should be drilled on the correct forms. She makes a mental note of these and plans games or other exercises that will give the desired drill. The drill should be given in a period set apart for corrective work, and not during the story-telling period.

**Sample stories.** It is not a part of the purpose of this book to set up standards, partly because standards must be tentative, but more particularly to save space, and because there are on the market several books giving standard compositions in considerable numbers. No primary teacher can afford to be without one of these books. A few of the best are listed at the end of this chapter.

The compositions that follow are original stories told by



first- and second-grade children. They are introduced here to serve as texts for some remarks that follow them.

#### FIRST-GRADE STORIES

1. Our baby is very fat. Father says she waddles like a duck. We all love her. Our baby is a girl.
2. Yesterday I fell into the brook. I got all wet. Mother spanked me and put me to bed.
3. A bird lives in our cherry tree. He wakes me up every morning. He is a robin.
4. Father made me a doll house. It has four rooms. One of them is Dolly's bedroom. I always put her to bed and say "Good night, dear." It seems as if I could hear her say "Good night, Mother."

#### SECOND-GRADE STORIES

5. The night before Christmas I hung up my stocking. Santa Claus came when I was asleep. He stuffed my stocking with presents. I hope some one filled his stocking.
6. My big doll's name is Betsy. I love Betsy, but she is a lot of trouble. I have to feed her and wash her face. At night I sing her to sleep.
7. When I am a man I am going to be a policeman. I shall whistle for the automobiles to start. The drivers had better look out for me. I think I shall be a mounted policeman.
8. Once a week I have to weed the onion bed. I put the weeds in a pile. When they are dry I burn them. I pull out some of the weeds with my fingers. The rest I hoe out.

All these stories may well be considered satisfactory for the grades in which they were told. No. 4 is far above the average first-grade original composition, but the type of ability it represents is sometimes developed in an exceptionally gifted child.

Stories 2, 4, 5, and 6 are simple and direct. Each of the other stories has a defect which may be pointed out here, although the teacher might not call attention to it in the early stages of original story-telling. The use of the pronoun *she*

in the second sentence of No. 1 makes it unnecessary to state that the baby is a girl. If the word *robin* had been used instead of *bird* in the first sentence of No. 3, the last sentence would have been unnecessary. In No. 7, the boy's ambition to be a mounted policeman might better have been stated in the first sentence. No. 8 does not tell facts in their right order.

It is a question to what extent these matters should be criticized at all in the first and second grades. They should certainly be disregarded until the pupils have gained skill in thinking out a story and telling it in sentences. If a child talks with ease in short, clear sentences, it will do no harm to call attention to defects of the sort described. The needs of the individual must be considered. No child must be discouraged by criticism for which he is not ready.

But while adverse criticism must be given with wise restraint, the meting out of merited praise needs no restriction. Praise, however, must be specific if it is to stimulate further growth in the individual, and incidentally to help the class as a whole. To say that a story is *good* amounts to little. The child must know why the story is good. After No. 4 had been told, for instance, a teacher might say, "Telling us what you thought your dolly said made your story very interesting, Mary." Or, after No. 5 she might say, "I am glad you thought of Santa's stocking as well as your own." These criticisms direct attention to the imaginative element that makes these stories superior to the others. Particularly important is it to praise the child who shows improvement, even though his story still has various defects. It may often happen that this child has done more genuine work than the more gifted pupil who tells a much better story.

## WRITTEN LANGUAGE

**A new way of expressing thought.** Oral and written language are but two different ways of expressing thought, but they are not equally simple ways. Ever since his earliest babyhood, a child has been expressing himself in ways that have become second nature. Actions of various sorts, play, speech, constructive work of many kinds — these are his natural modes of expression. Writing, on the other hand, is for him a highly artificial activity, and because it involves the mastery of a new set of symbols, it should be carefully prepared for and should be motivated at every step.

**The starting point.** Since a child can read before he begins to write, he already knows that thoughts may be expressed by printed symbols as well as by spoken words. In order to establish the closest possible relation between the book method of expressing thoughts and his own earliest efforts to use written symbols, it is a good plan to use cardboard letters as the introductory step to learning to write.

At first very short and simple sentences may be built, copying from the blackboard matter that has been evolved in oral language lessons. Ask the children if they would not like to have on their desks the stories made from the same kind of letters as are used in their books. The children's attitude toward the work will depend almost altogether upon the teacher's suggestion. If she introduces the exercise as something that is hard and that must on no account fail to be perfect, the children will regard it as an unwelcome job. If the teacher suggests by word and manner that there is fun ahead, the pupils will bring to the task the zest with which they attack a dissected puzzle. When the words have been built, the children will greatly enjoy changing seats and trying to discover errors in the words on the desks before them. A simple plan of giving each child a token of some sort for

every mistake he finds, and depriving him of one for every error of his own that is discovered, makes a game of the lesson.

The attention of the pupils having frequently been directed to the capital letter at the beginning of a sentence and the period at the end, there should be little difficulty in building the sentences correctly. Some children, however, become so absorbed in the proper arrangement of the letters that other matters are overlooked. This being the case, the pupil should be asked if he has remembered to make it very plain where the sentence begins and ends. Later the children should find their own mistakes. A mere hint to look carefully at the model will serve to put them on the scent of an error.

Work like that suggested is in many schools considered busy work; that is, it is work done by the pupils while the teacher is otherwise occupied. This is one of the gravest mistakes of the primary school. First steps in all lines of work should be closely supervised in order to avoid the formation of careless habits. The teacher should pass up and down the aisles, making sure that the children are working carefully, giving suggestion and help when needed, and striving always *to prevent* mistakes rather than *to correct* them. If the teacher keeps her requirements well within the ability of the class, infuses interest and enthusiasm by having simple speed contests, commends good work heartily, and kindly but firmly insists on real effort, she will lay the foundation of valuable habits. If she does not succeed in making the children take the work seriously as well as happily, she will intrench habits the reverse of valuable.

**First steps in writing.** It is very important that all written work be motivated, but this does not imply that all writing must be concerned with expressing thoughts in sentences. The first-grade child who is being taught to make large letters with a free movement and gradually to reduce the size of the



letters, may well begin with exercises requiring the writing of single words.

The first lessons will be copying, and at this point great care must be exercised to prevent copying letter by letter. This habit, easily formed, works havoc difficult to repair. The words should in all cases be familiar ones, and close attention to the form of the word should be secured. If pupils have difficulty in remembering the word as a whole from this visual image, it is evident that much practice in visualization is needed. The teacher may write words on the blackboard very deliberately, the children following closely, and then the word may be erased, while the children try to write it from memory, also on the blackboard. After beginning to write a word from a blackboard model, a pupil should not again look at the model until he compares his own finished work with it. If a word is to be written several times for the sake of drill, train the pupil to look at the blackboard model before writing each word, and not at a word previously written by himself.

**Motivating the writing of single words.** Here are some suggestions for motivating exercises requiring the writing of single words:

1. The teacher writes on the blackboard a list of words that have been used for pronunciation drills, and tells the children that she wishes to have a new kind of lesson on these words. For this purpose she needs slips of paper on which the words are written, and she asks the pupils to help her by writing the words. Children invariably respond graciously to a request for help from the teacher, and they are quite ready to do their part in preparing for the new kind of lesson. The teacher assigns one word to each pupil, and asks him to practice writing it until he can write it very clearly, as the papers she wishes must be easily read. This motivates practice, and as each child succeeds in producing a word that is easily readable, the teacher gives him one of the uniform slips of paper she has prepared. When the words are all written, each pupil pronounces his own, and then passes it to his nearest neighbor. The words are pronounced

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once more, and again passed on. This continues until each word returns to the writer. The slips may be saved and used several times, thus convincing the pupils that they performed a useful service in writing them. At the same time the class has had good writing practice and good drill in pronunciation.

2. The teacher may prepare a large fishpond by making a circle on the blackboard or on a large sheet of paper. Each child puts one fish into the pond, after practicing as before. The children will then angle for the prey, a fish being caught when it is touched with the pointer and the word correctly pronounced.

3. A large ladder may be drawn on a sheet of paper, each child, after careful practice, writing one word on the ladder. This ladder will serve for rapid pronunciation drill. The blackboard may be used for this drill at times, but there should be some practice with paper and pencil.

4. The children may write labels for the boxes in which materials are kept. At other times they may write the names of common things in the classroom. The slips will be distributed, and each child attaches the one he receives to the object it names.

5. The first-grade child should also learn to write his name, his father's name, and his address, using capitals correctly. This is to all intents and purposes single-word writing, and may easily be motivated.

**Copying sentences.** Sentence writing should also begin with copying in order to develop the written work step by step, each step taking the pupil a little in advance of the preceding one. This work may be motivated in much the same way as the writing of single words. It should be prepared for with similar drill, except that now a thought is to be expressed in several words, and each word must be mastered as to form before the children begin to write. The use of the capital and period should be emphasized as in sentence building with letter cards. Here are some simple exercises :

1. Let us imagine that the teacher has on the blackboard some simple sentences containing the word *does* that have been used in a good-usage drill. Before erasing the sentences to use the blackboard space otherwise, she asks the children to write the sentences on paper so that they may still be used. After practice

designed to secure accuracy and legibility, each child writes one of the sentences on a slip of paper. This results in several copies of each sentence. After they have been corrected, the slips are collected, to be redistributed during the next drill period. The slips may be used for several days.

2. The question form of sentence will have become familiar to the pupils from its constant use in all sorts of lessons. Call attention to the question mark in readers, and have it found in a large number of places. Give practice in making it, and then play this game:

Each child has a slip of paper on which he draws crudely the picture of a simple object whose name he knows. The picture may be wholly original or it may be copied from line drawings in some book. Under the picture, the artist writes, copying from the blackboard,

What is this?

The papers are then exchanged, and under the question each pupil writes the answer; as, for instance,

This is a chair.

It is understood beforehand that no question is to be answered if the question mark is omitted. In that case the paper goes back to the writer to be corrected before the game can proceed. Another rule is that, no matter how crude the drawing, the child receiving it must decide what it represents and write the answer. It is also understood that a pupil may ask the teacher for the spelling of any word, although only objects whose names are familiar to the class should be drawn.

3. Another sentence game utilizes pictures. A certain picture in a reader or other book is selected; the children talk about the picture, and the teacher writes on the blackboard any words that the children may not be able to spell. Each child then writes a question about the picture. When the sentences have been corrected *by the writers*, they are exchanged and each pupil writes the answer to the one he receives. The papers then go back to those who wrote the questions. These children decide whether or not the question was correctly answered. At the last, the papers will again be exchanged to serve for a simple reading lesson. Each child reads aloud the question and the answer on his paper.

**Writing notes.** As a rule, note writing would not be begun before the second grade. If at the end of the first year a child can write the word and the simple one-sentence exercises

suggested, he is probably doing all that should be required of him. In no other line of work is the injunction "Make haste slowly" so necessary.

Notes are suggested for the first written work demanding several sentences, because the form is simple and the notes may be motivated by a real need. Take, for instance, the storybook project discussed on page 13. It involves thanking several persons who helped. It was suggested that the children compose the note and the teacher write it. In the second grade, the children can do it all. If they wish aid in making covers for a book, for instance, they will naturally turn to the drawing teacher. The class decide what they wish to say, and build the note just as they did the class stories, the teacher writing it on the blackboard as the sentences are given. Here is a note of this sort written by second-grade children:

Dear Miss White,

We are going to make a picture book for Christmas. Will you please help us make a pretty cover for it?

The unsigned model is copied by all, under the close supervision of the teacher, and a note that is neat, well placed, and without mistakes is selected to send to Miss White. The child who wrote the winning note signs his name and grade, the teacher adding them to the blackboard model.

**Writing original stories.** The next step in advance in the second grade is the writing of original stories. It is a good plan to begin with very short stories previously told as an oral exercise. The problem is then simply that of telling the story in another way. These early written stories may be motivated by the desire to take them home. Like the notes, they should be written under the supervision of the teacher, and the pupils should be trained never to write a word unless they are sure of its spelling. The teacher will write on the



blackboard, or on a small piece of paper kept on the pupil's desk for the purpose, any word that is called for.

Both because writing stories is one of the least important activities of the second grade, and because it may so easily lead to habits that in later years will be difficult to overcome, it is wise strictly to limit the type of story the children are asked to write. A story that can be told in two short sentences, or at the most in three, is all that the average second-grade child should attempt. Indeed, many good teachers limit the story writing to the copying of stories worked out in class. This gives the teacher the opportunity to select for copying only those that are suitable.

A very successful teacher uses the following method: She selects a simple picture and writes on the blackboard three simple questions whose answers make a little story. The answers called for are as simple as the questions, but they all help each other tell the story. The point is to avoid establishing bad habits, while at the same time gratifying the child's natural ambition to write.

**The importance of good models of written work.** It is an excellent plan for the teacher also to write the early lessons in order to provide a copy that can be hung up in the room as a stimulus to the class. Very soon, however, the work of the pupils themselves should be used for the purpose, several of the best papers being hung up after every written lesson. Train the children to look carefully at these papers *before beginning to write*, and then strive to have their own work so good that it will be selected as a model. As the children improve, the models naturally become more creditable. The class should understand that a paper that serves as a model one month may not be worthy of the honor a month later.

#### STUDY OF A CHILD'S COMPOSITION

The following composition was written by a second-grade pupil, the teacher helping only with the spelling.

## MY SPRING VACATION

During my spring vacation I went to my fathers farm and saw the cowbirds following the cows. The next day I went horseback riding with my father. then we came back and had our lunch and after lunch Miss Prince came Miss Prince was mothers nurse when she was sick we talked about the trip then went home we had supper then retired.

The first and second sentences of this composition indicate that the writer had a good command of sentence form. There can be little doubt that the sudden transition to the run-on form was directly due to confused thinking. Clear-cut thoughts are expressed in the first two sentences, but the writer was then evidently swept away by the memory of a torrent of trivial happenings, and in attempting to narrate them lost all sense of clear expression. Here are some cautions suggested by this composition :

1. Avoid giving children impossible subjects for short compositions. Keep always in mind the *one-phase* idea, and make sure that the pupils also have it in mind. Nothing will help more than carefully worked-out class compositions on suitable subjects, and constant criticism of compositions that attempt to cover too much ground. Children are easily trained to see that one vacation happening is all that can be handled in a short story.

2. Have the compositions kept short. The limiting of the subject helps directly to produce this result, but even with a sufficiently narrow subject some children will ramble more or less. Keep them to the subject.

3. Remember that even ability of a high order may break down under impossible conditions. Do not feel that because a pupil is above the average he may safely overstep all restrictions. The composition under consideration shows what may easily happen under the circumstances.

4. Hold always before yourself as an aim the development of clear-thinking habits. Train the children to put into words one thought at a time, and not to begin to write until they have clearly in mind the entire sentence in which the thought is to be expressed.

## OTHER PHASES OF LANGUAGE WORK

There are other phases of language work relating to expression in words that might properly be discussed here. But because it does not seem necessary to treat them separately for each of the grade groups, they are considered at some length in other chapters. The Index will help you quickly to find what you need. Consult it for these topics: dramatization, reproduction, vocabulary growth, correct usage, tests, and measurements. You will find references to pages where you may get some help for your grade work, even though the topics are developed to meet the needs of higher-grade teachers also. Knowing the powers of your pupils as well as their needs, you can easily select what promises to further their growth in language power. Give special attention to the four chapters following this one and to Chapter Ten.

## FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Having in mind every type of activity in which your pupils engage in school, which afford the richest opportunities for unconscious language training? If you have not fully utilized these opportunities, decide how you can at once begin to do so.

2. List under the captions given below the opportunities your neighborhood affords for increasing language power by broadening the experience of your pupils: out-of-door excursions (for observing birds, trees, flowers, gardens, the work of running water, the work of frost, building operations, and so on); visits to stores, museums, or factories; keeping growing plants in the schoolroom; studying animal life (the larger animals out of school, and the smaller pets in school). Select the one that will be most helpful in connection with some project you have on hand, and plan accordingly.

3. What English evils other than carelessness may result from unsupervised written work?

4. Story-telling by the teacher has not been considered in this chapter, but it is very important. What language advantages may accrue to your pupils from hearing good stories told? The term *good* as applied to a story refers to its suitability for the grade as well

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as to its general qualities. Plan to improve as a story-teller by getting help from books written by experienced story-tellers and also by practice.

### FOR READING AND STUDY

#### STANDARDS AND METHODS

MAHONEY. *Standards in English*. World Book Company.

SAVITZ, BATES, AND STARRY. *Composition Standards*. Hinds, Hayden & Eldridge, Inc.

SHERIDAN. *Speaking and Writing English*. Benjamin H. Sanborn & Co.

(These three books contain large numbers of children's compositions arranged by grade. Every grade teacher should have at hand one of these books for constant reference, and to supplement *Self-Help Methods of Teaching English*.)

YOUNG-MEMMOTT. *Methods in Elementary English*. D. Appleton & Co.

#### PROJECTS

HOSIC-CHASE. *Brief Guide to the Project Method*. World Book Company. (This book will prove invaluable to the teacher who wishes to vitalize her English work. It gives the theory of the project in a simple way, suggests projects, and tells how to carry them out.)

KRACKOWITZER. *Projects in Primary Grades*. J. B. Lippincott Company. (This book is concrete and will prove very helpful.)

LEONARD. *English Composition as a Social Problem*. Houghton Mifflin Company. (Study Chapter I of this book.)

PICKETT-BOREN. *Early Childhood Education*. World Book Company. (Good for the kindergarten and the first-grade teacher.)

*Elementary School Journal*, 1923-1924. "Unified Kindergarten and First-Grade Teaching."

*Journal of Educational Method*. "The Clearing House." World Book Company. ("The Clearing House" deals regularly with projects and practical problems adapted to the various grades, work for the lowest grades being included.)

*Teachers College Record*, 1919-1920. "Horace Mann Studies in Primary Education." Teachers College, Columbia University.



*Twentieth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education.*  
Part I, Chapter II, "New Materials for the Primary Grades."  
Public School Publishing Company. (The chapter referred to  
contains reports of projects carried out by young children, and  
is very suggestive.)

## THE ART OF STORY-TELLING

- BAILEY. *For the Story-Teller.* Milton Bradley Company.  
BRYANT. *How to Tell Stories to Children.* Houghton Mifflin Com-  
pany.  
CATHER. *Educating by Story-Telling.* World Book Company.  
HORNE. *Story-Telling, Questioning, and Study*, Chapter I. The  
Macmillan Company.  
KEYES. *Stories and Story-Telling.* D. Appleton & Co.  
WYCHE. *Some Great Stories and How to Tell Them.* Newson & Co.

## STORIES TO TELL

Most of the books in the preceding list contain stories, as well as  
suggestions for telling them.

- BAILEY-LEWIS. *For the Story Hour.* Milton Bradley Company.  
BARNES. *Types of Children's Literature.* World Book Company.  
BRYANT. *New Stories to Tell to Children.* Houghton Mifflin Com-  
pany.  
COE. *The First Book of Stories for the Story-Teller.* Houghton  
Mifflin Company.  
COOKE. *Nature Myths and Stories.* A. Flanagan Company.  
HOLBROOK. *The Book of Nature Myths.* Houghton Mifflin Com-  
pany.  
LANSING. *Fairy Tales.* Ginn & Co.  
LINDSAY. *Mother Stories.* Milton Bradley Company.  
— *More Mother Stories.* Milton Bradley Company.  
MABIE. *Famous Stories Every Child Should Know.* Doubleday,  
Page & Co.  
O'GRADY-THROOP. *The Story-Teller's Book.* Rand McNally & Co.  
POULSSON. *For the Children's Hour.* Milton Bradley Company.  
— *In the Child's World.* Milton Bradley Company.  
WELSH. *Stories Children Love.* Dodge Publishing Company.  
WIGGIN-SMITH. *Tales of Laughter.* Houghton Mifflin Company.  
— *The Story Hour.* Houghton Mifflin Company.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE TEACHER, THE TEXTBOOK, AND THE PUPIL

#### INTRODUCTION

The factors in the learning process. The teacher, the textbook, the pupil — and the greatest of these is the pupil. It is for him that society has erected and equipped school buildings, has provided teachers and textbooks, and has assumed the burden of taxation involved. The pupil is to be trained for citizenship, and one vital requirement is the correct and effective use of English in all the common situations of life. The teacher and the textbook play important rôles in this training process. Before beginning the study of methods in grades above the second, it is important, therefore, that the relation of the teacher and the textbook to the self-help process of learning by the pupil be clearly comprehended.

This chapter is devoted to the purpose of making clear this relation. It should frequently be reviewed, because it is impossible to repeat in subsequent chapters as often as is desirable the facts set forth. These fundamental facts should be thoroughly ingrained in the teacher's mind, as they will not only serve to stimulate her own creative teaching impulses, but will also explain the reasons for some methods suggested in later chapters.

#### THE PUPIL

The pupil as a self-active being. A true conception of the pupil and his powers is essential. No argument is necessary to prove that he is not raw material to be transformed into a more or less finished product. This is but saying in another way that the school is not a factory.

The pupil is a conscious, self-active being who is to grow through the voluntary exercise of his own powers, and not by drastic manipulation from without. The teacher and the textbook serve merely to help the pupil to direct his own activities as effectively as possible, and to make conditions as favorable as circumstances permit.

**The foundation already laid.** It should be borne in mind that when the pupil has completed the second-grade work, he will have been in school at least two years; that he has had valuable social experience; that his power to communicate by means of words has grown somewhat through all the activities of the school and through simple lessons in composition; that he has begun to work for definite purposes; and that he has learned to read, thus having gained some skill in interpreting written symbols as well as spoken words. He is now ready to take a long step forward in the art of being his own teacher.

#### THE TEACHER

**The functions of the teacher.** What are the teacher's functions in the pupil's self-help learning process? They are many and varied, and she is in no danger of finding herself displaced, or even rendered subordinate. The self-help type of learning by the pupil demands of the teacher the highest degree of insight, sympathy, and skill. But no young teacher need feel discouraged if at first she is forced to rely somewhat fully upon the help of supervisors and books of method. If she takes up her task with appreciation of its significance, its complexity, and its boundless opportunity; if she herself becomes a student, working for clear-cut aims and constantly growing power; and if she sets up standards of attainment by which she may constantly measure results, she will not only reach her goal, but she will hugely enjoy the path that leads to it.

Here are some of the important functions of the teacher :

1. She must serve as a model in her English and also in her carriage, her manners, and all the other details that together make up personality.

2. She must know as fully as possible the pupil's native intelligence and his previous training. This knowledge will enable her to adapt her requirement to the ability of the pupils. When desirable she may make several assignments, the minimum one attainable by the least able children in the class *if they make the necessary effort*.

3. She must help the pupils to set up aims. The self-help method of learning demands that a pupil always know what he is driving at. If he wishes to acquire the art of using convincing language, he must appreciate the importance of being able to convince others, and definitely aim to acquire the power.

In *Reveries of a Schoolmaster*, Francis B. Pearson has an interesting chapter on "Targets." Among other illustrations he cites the way in which in his youth he saw a farmer make furrows with an old-fashioned plow. The old man placed stakes where the ends of the furrows were to be and tied white rags to the stakes. He then started across the field, keeping his eyes fixed on the white rag. The furrow was straight as an arrow.

The teacher must see that the pupil sets up an aim, and keeps his eye fixed on the target. This is purposeful activity.

4. She must help the pupil to set up standards of attainment. His immediate needs demand that the standards be attainable with reasonable effort. The use of the standards will be discussed in connection with written composition.

5. She must help her pupils to cultivate right habits. Consciously or unconsciously, English habits are being formed all the time, bad as well as good, and both kinds are subject to the same inexorable laws.

She must learn that talking about the formation of good English habits amounts to but little. The muscles of speech involved are deaf to this sort of appeal. They respond only to changed action so persistently enforced that the good habit displaces the poor one. This is true not only of English habits, but also of the concomitant habits of carelessness, indifference, forgetting assignments, and the entire flock of bad habits that tend at every step to defeat the accomplishment of the teacher's purpose. All these bad habits must be routed by the conscious substitution of the habits desired.



6. She must be ready to give help whenever the pupil really needs it, but she must help in a way to develop the power of self-help. It is easy to follow the path of least resistance by telling the pupil what he does not know, but it is fatal to his growth. *The teacher must do nothing for the pupil that he can be led to do for himself.*

7. She must often develop new topics, and thus break the way for more independent study by the pupil.

8. She must test accomplishment and keep track of the results for purposes of comparison.

9. She must expect growth, and watch for it. All pupils will not advance at the same pace, and this is not necessary. Steady improvement — slow it may be, but always manifest — is the test of satisfactory progress. If growth is not apparent, the teacher should find out what causes the difficulty, and help remove the stumbling block.

10. She must arouse a sense of responsibility. Sooner or later the pupil must realize his true relation to his home, the school, and the outside community, and appreciate in some degree what responsibility that relation imposes upon him. English lessons offer unexampled opportunity for developing the right attitude.

11. She must teach the pupils *how to study*. Methods for accomplishing this result will appear throughout this book, and are discussed later in this chapter in relation to the teacher and the textbook.

#### THE TEXTBOOK

**The importance of a textbook in English.** It is sometimes urged that no textbook of English is necessary. It is a question if this would be true even under the most ideal conditions, because the textbook is an important element in the self-help learning process. The recent tendency to use a book even in the third grade marks a notable onward step.

The pupil who enters the third grade has learned to read with some ease and comprehension, but his reading has been confined largely to stories. Stories appeal to his interest, and as a rule are easily understood. The only genuine difficulties encountered relate to the mechanics of reading. It happens, therefore, that when the pupil finds it necessary to read matter other than stories, he has trouble in interpreting it.

Fortunately the newer methods of teaching reading are already helping to overcome this condition. The pupil reads silently matter that requires thought, and then gives satisfactory evidence that he understands what he has read. Reading and interpreting the lessons in the language book and other textbooks gives added practice in the more reflective type of reading.

The functions of the language book in the self-help learning process are outlined in the following section. Perhaps it goes without saying that they are based on the various textbooks that meet modern demands. They apply, however, more or less completely to any textbook the teacher happens to be using.

**Functions of the language textbook.** The principal functions of the language textbook are outlined below.

1. That a child at each step of the educative process should apply all previously acquired power has become axiomatic. In accordance with this principle, his power to read should early be applied to the mastery of language as self-expression. Through the pupil's constantly growing power to read understandingly, the language book becomes a helpful means of self-teaching.

2. By means of its organization of subject matter, its emphasis on essentials, its abundant drill material, its suggestions for projects, its demand for periodical self-appraisal, its aid in setting up aims, its insistence on sincere, thorough work, and its requirement that the English power gained must be applied at all times when language is used, the book becomes a teaching force scarcely less important than the teacher herself.

3. The textbook makes it possible for a pupil to advance at his own pace, and to acquire the highest degree of English power of which he is capable without being held back by less gifted or less ambitious classmates.

4. The textbook is not only a factor in teaching how to think, but it makes thought necessary. In the class development of a topic, the teacher asks an important question whose answer requires thought. Some pupils make the necessary effort, and frequently one of these conscientious pupils is called on for the answer, because

the lesson must proceed. The lazy or the less gifted pupil consequently gets the answer ready made.

In studying from the textbook this is not the case. The pupil must answer the questions asked at each stage of the development, since failure to do so would block progress. He is forced to think in spite of a possible disinclination to make the necessary exertion. He becomes self-reliant, instead of being constantly carried on the shoulders of his classmates.

5. The textbook automatically reduces the size of the class. As time goes on, an increasing number of pupils will become able to prepare their work with the aid of the textbook alone. As they develop this power, they should be excused from class-development lessons, thus enabling the teacher to give more individual attention to the pupils who are less advanced.

All teachers should make themselves familiar with the Dalton plan, not necessarily for the purpose of introducing it as a whole, but to take advantage of many of its methods for inculcating habits of individual and group study. The plan promotes initiative, social coöperation, and economy of time and effort through independent study.

6. The textbook makes frequent reviews convenient, and invalidates any excuse that might be offered for failure which review might have forestalled.

7. The textbook becomes a valuable reference book. In time the pupil learns to use it in the most effective way — through the Index. He should be trained to consider the book a legitimate help at all times. Too many teachers treat all English exercises as tests. Instead of being tests, they should be regarded as *opportunities for making headway by using every available help*. The closed book has had its day, and now the open book is coming into its own. The habit of referring to it is not likely to be overcultivated.

8. The textbook makes it possible for the teacher to hold her pupils responsible for what has been taught. A pupil who is not only permitted to refer to his book for help, but actually encouraged to do so, has little excuse for any failure that might be avoided by referring to the book. Take the matter of letter writing, for instance. The letter form is taught carefully, and yet in our schools a vast number of pupils never master it. Consider the result of impressing upon the children the fact that the book contains all necessary letter models, and that until the form is absolutely mastered, no letter is to be handed in unless it has been compared with the model in the book. Only letters *perfect in form* will be accepted.

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9. The textbook is the teacher's ally. It shares with her the teaching responsibility. Note that some of its functions cannot possibly be performed by the teacher, even had she unlimited time, strength, and ability. Other functions she shares with the book, and both book and teacher become more effective because of the partnership.

10. The textbook helps teach the pupils *how to study*. How pupil, teacher, and book share in this work is outlined in the following section.

### LEARNING TO STUDY

#### WHAT STUDY IS

This section is designed to give some hints as to the way in which teacher and textbook together train the pupil how to study. Study is the only path that leads from a recognized problem to its correct solution. It is therefore of supreme importance that the pupil learn to follow the path to the goal.

Briefly stated, *Study is the mental process, or series of processes, by means of which the mind overcomes obstacles encountered in seeking to carry out a clearly defined purpose.* The search for the means of surmounting the obstacle requires *thought*. If there is no obstacle, no thought is required, and there is consequently no occasion for study. *Study is mental work.*

#### SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF STUDY

**How a farmer studied.** Perhaps a few simple illustrations of study processes will help at this point. Take, for instance, the case of the farmer referred to on page 46.

The farmer had a purpose — to make a straight furrow. In seeking to accomplish his purpose with no aid except such skill as he had acquired through practice, he had encountered an obstacle. He could not make a straight furrow. Study was therefore necessary.

Possibly the farmer tried other ways than the one finally adopted. However that may be, eventually he must have reasoned something like this: If I am to make a good furrow,



the ends must be opposite each other, and the furrow must follow a straight line between the ends. Perhaps if I mark the ends of the furrows, that will help me to plow straight.

Having made his plan, the farmer put up stakes where the ends of the furrows were to be, and bent to his task. But he found that his experiment did not work because he could not see the stakes clearly from a distance. Once more he pondered, and decided that perhaps a white rag tied to the stake would help. This experiment worked. The farmer found that by keeping his eye fixed on the white spot, he could make a straight furrow.

He had found the solution of his problem, and thereafter made all furrows in the same way.

Here is an analysis of the process :

1. A purpose — to make a straight furrow.
2. An obstacle encountered — inability to make a straight furrow unaided.
3. Thought — making a plan to set up stakes.
4. Experiment — testing the plan, which did not work. A second plan followed by another test.
5. Immediate result — straight furrow achieved.
6. Future application — all furrows made in the same way.

Let us see if this outline applies in other study cases, beginning with a pre-school act of study.

**How a young child studied.** A child saw a jar of jam on a high shelf, and craved a taste. He tried to reach the jam, but arms and legs refused to be sufficiently stretched. He therefore thought of ways and means. He began to experiment, possibly trying to climb by means of lower shelves. The experiment failed. He then realized that he must find something on which to climb. He looked about, decided to try a chair, and shoved it into position. He climbed up and found that he could reach the jam. He sated his appetite and climbed down again. Later when he wished to get anything

beyond his unaided reach, he used a chair or something similar.

1. Purpose — to get some jam.
2. Obstacle encountered — inability to reach it.
3. Thought — making a plan to climb up in some way, eventually choosing a chair.
4. Experiment — plan tested.
5. Immediate result — jam secured.
6. Future application — same plan used at other times.

Did the child study? Quite as surely as did the farmer, albeit both studied almost unconsciously.

**How a fifth-grade boy studied.** Now let us take from school life an illustration concerned with an English problem.

A fifth-grade class obtained from the principal permission to visit a tile factory if the owner's consent could be obtained. The visit was made, and the principal expressed a desire to have a written account of the visit to use in connection with an address he was to make the following week. The class at first considered making a joint report, but on second thought decided that each pupil should write independently, and the best report should be chosen for the principal's use. Here is the way one boy went to work.

He had had some training in writing from a simple outline, and he therefore jotted down topics that in an orderly way suggested the main processes involved in tile-making. In an introductory paragraph, he told of the trip to the factory and the reception of the class by Mr. Bryce, the owner. Following his outline, he then described briefly each process.

Up to this point he had met no obstacles that he could not surmount by a thoughtful application of knowledge and skill previously gained. But at the last, he encountered a difficulty. He wished to relate that as they left the factory Mr. Bryce told them that he would be glad to have them come again and see how the clay was tested to determine its fitness

for a particular type of product. Having been trained to think a sentence through before writing a word of it, he began to express his thought in words: "Mr. Bryce said that he would be glad to have us come again and see the clay tested." But just as he was about to write, he remembered that there was some vexatious punctuation connected with writing quotations. Sometimes quotation marks were used and sometimes not. How was it in this case?

As he could not recall the rule, he referred to the Index of his textbook and found the references to direct and indirect quotations. He refreshed his mind on these, but even then he was uncertain whether or not he was quoting Mr. Bryce's exact words. Both kinds of quotations might begin with "Mr. Bryce said."

Determined to make no mistake, he made the following plan: He would imagine himself to be Mr. Bryce, and give the invitation just as if the class were before him. He began, "I shall be glad — etc." Plainly Mr. Bryce would not use the words "that he" in his invitation, and the quotation was therefore indirect, and required no special punctuation.

At that moment he remembered that when direct quotations had first been studied, the class had looked over a number of interesting stories and discovered that as a rule the direct quotation made the story much livelier than did the indirect. He accordingly changed his sentence as follows: Mr. Bryce said, "I shall be glad to have you come again to see how the clay is tested."

Here is the analysis of this act of learning by self-help study:

1. Purpose — to write a good report of a visit to a factory.
2. Obstacle encountered — writing quotations.
3. Thought — with help of textbook recalling what had previously been learned about quotations; recognizing the difficulty, and making a plan for help in deciding which form of quotation had been used.

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4. Experiment — testing the plan. The boy puts himself in Mr. Bryce's place, and talks as that gentleman actually did; is convinced that the quotation framed is indirect; thinks further, and decides to use a direct instead of an indirect quotation.
5. Immediate result — not only is quotation written correctly, but force is added to the report.
6. Future application — same method is used at other times when in doubt.

The cases of the farmer and the young child show how universal study is, and how independent of outside aid it may be. Such cases are particularly valuable for consideration. But where does the teacher come in? Let us see.

The illustration of the fifth-grade boy clearly reveals the effect of his school training. His good habits of work in general, his prompt resort to the textbook for needed help, and his experimentation were the direct results of self-help response to good teaching. Two further illustrations will be given showing teacher and pupil in action together while the latter is being taught how to study.

### LEARNING HOW TO STUDY FROM A TEXTBOOK

Imagine that the textbook gives the lesson below. It is suitable for a third grade early in the school year. (Naturally larger type would be used in a pupil's book.)

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#### STUDYING STORIES ABOUT PETS

For your next lesson you may tell stories about one of your pets. If you have no pet, you may tell what one you should like to have and why.

The first thing to do is to decide what you will tell about your pet. Shall you try to tell all about it, or shall you choose one interesting thing? The following stories may help you to decide which is the better way. They were told about the same canary.



We have a pet canary at home. He is bright yellow. He eats bird seed and drinks water. Sometimes he takes a bath. Our canary sings very sweetly.

My pet canary likes ice cream. Every Sunday I take him a spoonful after dinner. He chirps when he sees me coming with it. One Sunday he pecked at the ice cream ninety-nine times. I tried to make him do it once more, but he wouldn't.

In what ways are both stories good? Which story might be told about almost any canary? Which story is the more interesting? Why?

Try to make your pet story like the more interesting canary story. If your pet can do a trick, or if he has ever done some unusual thing, that will make a good story.

One child may tell a pet story today. The teacher will write it on the blackboard. If it is not told in short, clear sentences, the class may help. Read the story and see if you can make it still better.

Take plenty of time to think about the story you are to tell for your next lesson. When you have decided what to tell about your pet, think what you wish to say first. Put this thought into the first sentence. Put the thought that should come next into a second sentence, and so on. Perhaps you will enjoy telling your story at home before you tell it at school.

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#### TEACHING THE LESSON

1. *Aims.* The teacher's aim is to train the children to select one phase of a subject and deal with it in a short paragraph, and at the same time learn to use the textbook.

The pupil's aim is to learn with the help of the book to tell a more interesting story than formerly.

2. *Preparation.* The teacher thoroughly familiarizes herself with the lesson in the book, keeping her eye fixed on its purpose and the means employed. She recalls what the pupils already know about story-telling — choosing an interesting subject, telling the story in short, clear sentences, and making the voice help the listeners. She

anticipates what difficulties may arise, and definitely plans how to meet them.

The pupil's preparation is all that he has already learned about story-telling, his ability to read, and a little previous experience with the language book.

3. *The lesson development.* At this stage the pupils will not be asked to read the lesson before the class period, although some may do so. The lesson begins with all books open.

*Teacher:* I wonder if you ever thought that the lessons in this book were written by some one who wished to talk to you by using printed words. Let us think of the author as one of your teachers. The book-teacher tells you first of all what today's lesson is about. What is it about?

*Pupil:* Studying stories about pets.

*Teacher:* Yes, today we are to study stories about pets, and that sounds interesting. In the first paragraph the book-teacher tells what you are to do in the next lesson. Read the first paragraph.

(Whether the paragraph is read silently or aloud depends upon the ability of the class. Probably in a majority of third grades it will be well to have it read aloud in order to make sure that all children get the message. As soon as possible, the reading should be silent, the response indicating whether the message is comprehended. After the paragraph has been read, the teacher proceeds.)

*Teacher:* You know now what today's lesson is about, and you also know what you are to do tomorrow. Why do you think the book told you about tomorrow?

*Pupil:* I think it told us because both lessons are about pet stories.

*Pupil:* I think it told us so we can get ready.

*Teacher:* Why do you need to get ready for story-telling?

*Pupil:* We have to think how to tell the story.

*Pupil:* We have to tell an interesting story.

*Pupil:* We have to use good sentences.

*Teacher:* Yes, there are many things to learn about story-telling. Have you learned them all? (The children smile, and the teacher continues.) If there is so much to learn, perhaps you can now think why the author planned today's lesson.

*Pupil:* She wanted to help us.

*Teacher:* Read the second paragraph and see if that is true. (The paragraph is read, and the children nod assent.) What is the first thing the book tells you to do?

*Pupil:* It tells us to decide what we will tell about our pet.

*Teacher:* In the next question it speaks of two ways of telling the pet stories. What does it speak about first?

*Pupil:* It speaks about telling all about the pet.

*Teacher:* What is the other way?

*Pupil:* The other way is telling one thing about the pet.

*Teacher:* Does the book tell you which is the better way?

*Pupil:* No, Miss North, we have to decide ourselves.

*Teacher:* How does the book help you to decide?

*Pupil:* It tells two stories about the same canary.

*Teacher:* All right; read the first.

(A pupil reads the first. Another pupil then reads the second.)

*Teacher:* How many of you have a canary? (Many raise their hands.) How many of you could tell the first story about your canary?

*Pupil:* It just fits my canary.

*Pupil:* It fits mine too.

*Pupil:* It fits mine except that my canary is greenish. (Many others indicate that the story would describe, or nearly describe, their birds.)

*Teacher:* Now think of the second story once more. Does that fit your canary? (All shake their heads.) Now we are ready to answer the questions. Read silently the questions that follow the second story, and when you are ready to answer them, take your eyes off your book.

(All read, and one by one indicate that they are ready.)

*Teacher:* You may answer the questions without reading them aloud.

(The questions are answered, all agreeing that the stories are both good because they are told in good sentences, but that the second is much more interesting than the first, because it tells something that they had not heard before.)

*Teacher:* Think carefully now, and tell exactly what you have learned today about story-telling. Is it better to try to tell all about your pet, or to tell one interesting story about it?

*Pupil:* It's a lot more interesting to tell just one story.

*Teacher:* Then we are ready to plan our pet stories for tomorrow. The book suggests that we tell one story today. How will that help you?

*Pupil:* It will give us a chance to try.

*Teacher:* Very well. Who will tell one?

(A pupil volunteers, and tells a story about how her dog took care of some baby chickens. The teacher writes it on the blackboard, and all read and try to improve it.)

*Teacher:* The last paragraph tells you exactly how to go to work at your story. Read the paragraph silently, and if there is anything you don't understand, ask questions.

(As the paragraph is comparatively simple, few children will have difficulty in interpreting it. When the teacher is sure that all understand, she closes the lesson.)

And now that you all understand how to make your stories interesting tomorrow, we shall expect the best stories you have ever told.

An analysis of this lesson reveals the following conditions :

1. Purpose — to learn one new way of improving stories.
2. Problem or obstacle — to find out the new way and understand it.
3. Thought — reading and interpreting the directions of the book; recognizing the problem; comparing the illustrative stories to discover in what ways they are different; selecting the more interesting and discovering why it is more interesting; expressing in words what is discovered.
4. Experiment — telling in class a story in which the principle is applied.
5. Result — knowledge of new principle to be applied the following day in telling original stories.
6. Future application — the same principle applied whenever telling short, one-paragraph stories.

On the following day the children would tell their stories. In each case, the class would decide whether the story-teller had selected one interesting fact about his pet and had told about nothing else. Since limiting the subject is the new step in story-telling, it should for the time being hold the center of the stage. This point being decided, the following questions would also be answered :

Was the story interesting?

Was it told in clear sentences?

Did the story-teller's voice help the listeners?



## ANOTHER LESSON IN STUDYING FROM THE BOOK

Before taking up this lesson, the pupils should have some training in interpreting directions by taking the following steps: thinking what the direction means, seeing in their minds what they are to do, and doing it.

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## WHAT LANGUAGE HAS TO DO WITH NUMBER WORK

When you are trying to follow directions, do you act the moment you hear the directions? What do you do first?

The power to see things in your mind will help you in all your school work. You have language lessons partly to gain this power. Think how it helps in number work.

Suppose you have this problem:

In my garden are four rows of lettuce plants with six in each row. How many plants are there in all?

The moment you read the problem you should see in your mind a picture of a garden. What things does the problem tell you about the garden? If you see the picture clearly, draw it on the blackboard.

How many plants have you drawn in each row? How many rows have you? How many six's of plants have you? How many plants have you?

Some problems are so easy that you may not need to draw the picture that you have in your mind, but draw it if it helps you.

This lesson is put in here to show you that a number problem is also a language problem. In all your number work, let the words of the problem make pictures in your mind. You will then have little trouble.

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## TEACHING THE LESSON

This lesson might be taken up in class in much the same way as the preceding lesson if the children still need that kind of help when the lesson is reached. But we will assume that

they have now had considerable experience in studying from the book and can therefore study more independently.

The first step would be taken at the close of a language period when the lesson would be assigned.

*Teacher:* We will now take a few minutes for looking ahead at tomorrow's lesson. What is the subject of the lesson?

*Pupil:* What language has to do with number work.

*Teacher:* You may all read the lesson silently. When you have finished, take your eyes off the book.

(The children read, and one by one indicate that they have finished.)

*Teacher:* How many understand the lesson so fully that they can study it without further help?

(Some children raise their hands, and they are dismissed.)

The teacher then asks the remaining pupils to tell what they do not understand, in each case allowing a pupil to give the needed help if possible. When everything has been made clear, the class is dismissed with the injunction to be prepared on the following day to take a simple number problem and explain exactly how they would study and solve it.

The following day, in either the number or the language period, the lesson is taken up. The teacher has on the black-board a number of simple problems.

*Teacher:* (Books are open.) Today we are going to learn how to solve a number problem with the help of what we have learned about language. Read the problem in the lesson.

(A pupil reads the problem.)

*Teacher:* The problem gives a word picture of the garden. What does it tell first?

*Pupil:* It tells that there are four rows of lettuce plants in a garden.

*Teacher:* What does it tell next?

*Pupil:* It tells that there are six plants in each row.

*Teacher:* Does it tell anything further? (Children shake heads or otherwise indicate their answer. If a child heedlessly reads the question, the teacher may ask him what the words tell. When he

finds that they tell nothing, he makes the discovery that they ask a question.)

*Teacher:* Does the word picture make you see a picture of the garden in your minds? If it does, go to the blackboard and draw the picture quickly. You may make X's for the plants. (All or a part of the children, as directed, go to the board and draw the pictures.)

*Teacher:* Do you see any picture that is not like the word picture? (If any mistakes have been made, the children themselves find and correct them.)

*Teacher:* Now look once more at the problem in the book. It first tells you something. What else does it do?

*Pupil:* It asks us how many plants there are in all.

*Teacher:* Answer the question.

*Pupil:* There are twenty-four plants.

*Teacher:* Now let us look at the first problem on the blackboard. Does it have a telling part and an asking part? If it does, read the telling part.

(A pupil reads from the blackboard.)

*Teacher:* That is the word picture. All who have a picture in their minds may close their eyes. (When a majority of the pupils have closed their eyes, the teacher proceeds.) Mary, Jennie, Tom, and Frank may go to the blackboard and draw the picture that they see.

(The children draw, and the class criticizes as before.)

*Teacher:* Tell what the problem asks, and give the answer.

(The question is read, and the answer given.)

*Teacher:* You will always find two parts in a problem. Which part helps you make a picture of the problem?

*Pupil:* The telling part helps us make pictures.

*Teacher:* How does the picture help you?

*Pupil:* It makes it easy to get the answer.

*Teacher:* Very well. You may now take the next problem, and without questions from me, give the telling part of the problem, and make the picture you see; then read the question, and answer it.

(Several pupils do this, and the remaining problems are dealt with in the same way.)

*Teacher:* Why have you been studying this lesson?

*Pupil:* It will help us answer our number problems.

*Teacher:* How? Give the study steps. (With such additional

questioning as may prove necessary, the class finally gives these steps :)

- Read the problem.
- Find the telling part.
- Make a picture of it.
- Find the question.
- Look at the picture and answer the question.

*Teacher:* If you always study your problems in this way, you will have little trouble with them. Whenever hereafter you have a number problem, study it by taking the five study steps, and be ready to tell exactly how you studied it.

It needs no argument to prove that this lesson gives valuable language training in addition to the help it gives in solving problems. It cannot be too often emphasized that it is the function of the language lesson to make effective in all life situations the power to interpret and the power to express, and it is of prime importance that the pupils early appreciate this fact.

Perhaps enough illustrations have been given to show in a simple way what study is, and how children are trained to study. No matter how difficult later problems may prove, they will involve little that has not already been illustrated. The difference will be in the complexity of the lessons, but each element of the more complex situation is in itself a problem as simple as those that have been considered in this chapter.

**Further suggestions for teaching children to use the textbook.** If this book were a manual for a particular set of textbooks, it would be comparatively easy to show how the textbook could best be utilized in teaching children how to study. Since, however, it is necessary to make the suggestions somewhat general, a few are given that will apply to any textbook.

1. One real difficulty in teaching children to study from a textbook lies in the opportunity afforded the pupils to look ahead and thus get information that should result from their own thinking in response to questions. There seems to be no way of overcoming this textbook limitation, since the lessons must be completed, and com-



pletion often necessitates direct reference to the facts that earlier questions sought to secure from the pupils.

The remedy seems to lie in training the pupils to take one step at a time, answering each question as it is encountered, without seeking help from what follows. Should a pupil give evidence of having discovered what appears to be a royal road to learning, he might in class be asked to explain the lesson fully. If he can do this, he has evidently fully comprehended it. If he cannot stand before the class and give clearly the line of thought that he followed, he can readily be led to see the cause of his failure, and be induced to reach his goal by thoughtful, step-by-step study.

2. It is a good plan for a teacher always to go over a textbook development lesson in order to see whether the lesson needs supplementing. If such proves to be the case, the need should be provided for at the time the lesson is assigned.

3. Whether or not the textbook suggests review as the first step after the problem of the lesson is recognized, the teacher should see that taking this step becomes habitual. In the study illustration beginning on page 52, note that the boy began his study of direct quotations by reviewing what he had previously learned about writing them. First he tried to recall all that he knew, and when he found that he could not solve his problem by this means, he resorted to the textbook, using the Index to help him find what he needed.

4. The study outline given on page 58 was derived from the analysis of a specific act of study. This is by no means the only reliable study outline. It will be interesting for the reader to compare the study factors as given by Dr. McMurry in *How to Study* and the study outline given by Dr. Horne in *Story-Telling, Questioning, and Study*. There are no fundamental differences in these outlines, although they differ in particulars.

Here is another study outline that successful teachers have found very useful. It presupposes the recognition by the pupil of what is to be learned in the lesson.

*Review.* Recall all that you already know about the subject. Refer to the Index of your textbook, and see if you have forgotten any important matter.

*Advanced study.* Read each direction and question carefully, *think* what it means, *plan* what you are to do, *do* it to the best of your ability, and then *test* your work — that is, go over it to see if you have accomplished what you set out to do. These are the steps: *Read* and *think*, *plan*, *do*, *test*.

In the earlier grades, the pupils should acquire good habits of study by working with the teacher, who leads the class from step to step as each is mastered. But in the higher grades, certainly not later than the sixth, it is very helpful for the children consciously to follow some simple study outline which has been clearly worked out, either in the textbook or by the class and teacher together.

#### SUPERVISED STUDY

Logically this chapter should include some discussion of supervised study in the more technical sense in which the phrase is now employed. For practical reasons, however, the subject is left for a later chapter. Consult the Index.

#### FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. To what extent do you agree with this book regarding the main functions of a teacher? What other functions, if any, would you add to the list?
2. Analyze an act of study of your own and compare the outline you evolve with that on page 63. Compare it also with other study outlines you have found in the course of your reading.
3. After studying the lesson beginning on page 59, select a lesson from your textbook and plan how you would handle it in class.
4. Can you teach a pupil how to study without yourself first being able to study? Why, or why not?
5. What suggestions made in this chapter may be useful to you in teaching other subjects than English?
6. What can you do at once to improve your pupils' study habits?

#### FOR READING AND STUDY

- DEWEY. *The Dalton Laboratory Plan*. E. P. Dutton & Co.
- EARHART. *Types of Teaching*, Chapter XIV, "Training Children How to Study." Houghton Mifflin Company.
- HALL-QUEST. *The Textbook*, Chapters V, VI, and VII. The Macmillan Company.
- HORNE. *Story-Telling, Questioning, and Study*, Chapter III. The Macmillan Company.

- JONES. *Teaching Children to Study*. The Macmillan Company.
- MCGREGOR. *Supervised Study*. The Macmillan Company. (For the junior high school teacher.)
- McMURRY. *How to Study*. The Macmillan Company. (This book should be studied by the teacher who wishes to go into the subject of "How to Study" in a thoroughgoing way.)
- PARKHURST. *Education on the Dalton Plan*. E. P. Dutton & Co.
- STRAYER-NORSWORTHY. *How to Teach*. The Macmillan Company. (Study particularly Chapter I, "The Work of the Teacher"; Chapter VII, "How Thinking May Be Stimulated"; and Chapter XIV, "How to Study.")

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SELF-HELP ACTIVITIES

#### INTRODUCTION

**Purpose of this chapter.** So far as their language value is concerned, the activities discussed in this chapter have worth only as they are applied to the development of habits and skills in oral and written composition. In later chapters frequent reference is made to these activities, but this preliminary discussion serves several distinct purposes. It shows how the process of developing the activities in itself affords excellent language experience; it emphasizes their importance; and later it obviates the necessity of stopping to discuss the activities when it is the purpose to rivet the attention upon problems requiring their application.

**Habits and skills.** All language instruction seeks to develop either *habits* or *skills*, but these words are so often used as synonyms that it seems worth while to define the sense in which each is employed in this book. A *habit* is an act which, irrespective of the amount of thought expended when first performed, has finally become mechanical. Illustrations of desirable English habits are using common words with unvarying correctness, spelling common words correctly, the tendency to think before acting or expressing in any way, the tendency to use all necessary helps, using the correct letter form, and the like. A *skill* is the power to do something effectively by taking thought and using every other means of help that is at hand. Illustrations of English skills are using language in a way to interest, to convince, to persuade; choosing the most effective word at every point; consciously applying all principles learned. In general it may be said that the larger the number of habits cultivated, the greater will be the amount of mental energy available for developing skills.



**Self-help activities classified.** Although there is some overlapping, self-help activities fall roughly into three classes. The first includes those activities that result in ideals; the second those that result in a knowledge of facts needed to attain the ideals; and the third those that develop efficiency in the individual and in the group of which he is a unit. Both habits and skills are concerned. Each class of activities will be considered in turn.

#### SELF-HELP ACTIVITIES THAT RESULT IN IDEALS

**Setting up aims.** We have seen that study is mental effort consciously directed to overcoming the obstacles encountered in trying to carry out a purpose. If the effort is to produce results with a minimum expenditure of time and energy, it must at every stage of the study process be directed toward a definite aim.

From the first the pupil should help in setting up the aim, although the word *aim* may not be used with the younger children. Take oral composition, for instance. By contrasting in class two compositions, one having its thoughts strung together in a long run-on sentence, and the other having its thoughts expressed in clear-cut sentences, the teacher leads the pupils to discover that the second form is better because each thought stands out clearly. They therefore decide that they will tell their stories in short, clear sentences. They have now set up an aim, and for the time being this aim remains dominant. Each pupil who prepares a composition does it with the determination to use good sentences. He has set up a target.

Needless to say, this aim is not pursued until every child hits the bull's eye. This is neither necessary nor possible. The feature concerned should have enough attention to secure improvement and to make sure that the child keeps it in mind as a necessary characteristic of a good story.

A new leading aim — choosing strong beginning sentences, for instance — may then be adopted, the previous one still being constantly kept in view. Each pupil now gives special attention to the way in which he starts his composition.

In this way, as new steps in composition are taught, one by one, new aims are set up at intervals, each for the moment holding the center of the stage, and each determined by the pupils themselves as the result of the study of models, contrasting models being particularly effective.

The same definite setting up of aims should characterize all phases of language work. In every exercise, whether concerned with correct usage, interpretation, or expression in words, the pupil should keep his eye fixed on a target, and strive to get as close as possible to the bull's eye.

**Criticism.** Criticism as a self-help activity is closely related to setting up aims, for it is the purpose of criticism to determine to what extent the aims have been attained.

The teacher's criticism is valuable only so far as it stimulates self-criticism. Day after day a teacher may suggest to a pupil that he speak distinctly, and day after day the injunction may be necessary. Not until the pupil criticizes his own speech and makes speaking distinctly a definite aim, does real improvement begin. It is the teacher's privilege to lead the pupil to set up an aim, and then to hold him responsible day after day for determining how well he is accomplishing his purpose. And while he is cultivating the power of self-criticism, he is becoming increasingly qualified to criticize his mates. Some characteristics of effective criticism are outlined below.

1. *Criticism, like charity, begins at home.* A pupil is not likely to criticize the work of others in a helpful way until he has acquired some skill in scrutinizing and estimating the worth of his own work.

2. *Criticism is concerned with every feature of a piece of work.* It notes strength as well as weakness.

3. *Criticism is specific.* General criticism is ordinarily wasted. If general terms are used, reasons should be given. To say that a composition is "good" means little. To say that it is good because it is told in clear-cut sentences, because the words make vivid pictures, or because it has a point and sticks to it — these definite criticisms are helpful.

4. *In general, criticism should be limited to the matters being specifically aimed at.* It is a good plan, at least in the earliest years, to frame questions to be answered by the pupil when criticizing. In the beginning stages of oral composition these questions might be used:

Was the story interesting?

Was it told in clear sentences?

Did the story-teller's voice help the listener?

As each additional aim is set up, a new question may be added to the list.

5. *Criticism is a form of service.* Even young children learn to appreciate this fact if they are asked to help others by telling what is good in a piece of work and what might be improved. So far from being allowed to degenerate into fault finding, criticism should be elevated to a place of honor because it is a form of social service.

6. *Criticism is constructive.* No pupil should be allowed to give adverse criticism without being ready to suggest a remedy.

7. *Criticism is polite.* This involves speaking directly to the person whose work is under consideration, naming the good features first, and then referring to the weaker features in a way that will not antagonize or humiliate the pupil who is being helped. As a rule, the failure to observe these conditions results from thoughtlessness or the absence of a helpful spirit. A critic, for instance, might say, "Would your story be better if you used the word *angry* instead of *mad*?" Or, "I think it would be better to use the word *angry* instead of *mad*." Both forms of criticism are more likely to produce a desirable result than a bald statement like "*Mad* isn't the right word to use. You ought to say *angry*." After all, politeness is but consideration for the feelings of others.

These fundamental characteristics of effective criticism should always be kept in mind by the teacher. She will, as a rule, criticize directly only when the pupils are incompetent

to do it. Except in the case of flagrant error, it is safe to adhere to this principle of criticism: *Ignore for the time being any matters not concerned with the aims that the class has consciously set up.*

**Setting up standards.** This activity is closely related to setting up aims and to criticism. The aim set before the class is often ideal in its perfection, for "the reach must exceed the grasp." It is distinctly valuable because of its urge to the greatest possible effort, but it is not always attainable. We train children to aim for convincing speech, and set before them as a model the work of a master, although we do not expect them to achieve an equal degree of success. For this reason, attainable standards should also be put before the class.

At the end of the preceding chapter are listed books that contain standard compositions for all grades. These books will be of great service to a teacher for comparative use, but she should also derive standards from the work of her own pupils and the work of other pupils of the same grade in the home district or town. The results that a class can achieve by studying the work of its own members and emulating the best is of first consequence. Later it is helpful to discover how this best compares with the best of more distant schools of like grade.

The more exact measurement of composition quality by means of carefully prepared scales is considered in Chapter Eleven.

**Learning to see.** "Eyes have they, but they see not." This applies to many children as well as to adults. It is one of a teacher's duties to see that it does not describe her pupils.

Learning to see is closely related to all that has preceded in this chapter concerning written composition. Many pupils who know exactly what they should do fail to do it, and then



fail to see the error they have made. It is one thing to have on the retina the image of what has been written, and quite another to apprehend errors. And yet the errors that the pupils cannot detect for themselves might almost as well remain uncorrected as to be pointed out by the teacher. One good exercise for training children to see is to write on the blackboard a composition written by one of the class, tell how many errors it contains of the sort the class is battling against, and give a limited time in which to find them all. Compositions may also be returned to the pupils who wrote them, bearing simply a figure that records the number of mistakes discovered by another pupil. It then becomes the writer's job to find and correct them. Persistent effort of this sort by a pupil, combined with a natural satisfaction in making the improvement that is expected, will ultimately in most cases destroy the blind spot that has resulted from carelessness or indifference.

**Learning to hear.** As in the case of normal eyes, perfectly good ears often fail to function effectively. A child knows, let us say, that there is no such word as *ain't*; but he uses it, nevertheless, and he fails to notice when another person uses it. This is due to long-continued habit. The child will have gone a long way toward breaking the habit when he becomes sensitive to the use of the word by other people.

Exercises in recording all errors of speech heard, as described in Chapter Five, tend to make the ears critical, and so help to establish an ideal of correct speech. This once established, the habit of using the word, even though it may still persist, has been undermined. The child who gave the following advice to her younger sister had already gone a long way toward correcting her own speech: "Eva, you mustn't say *ain't*; it ain't right."

## SELF-HELP ACTIVITIES RESULTING IN KNOWLEDGE

Habits and skills are outcomes sought. They often depend upon facts, and consequently a knowledge of certain facts is necessary. This knowledge is of use only as it functions in improved expression, but the acquisition of the facts *when they are needed* is an important part of language training. Several activities are involved.

**Learning to use the dictionary.** Active mental life is based on thought, and if thoughts are to be communicated in writing, symbols must be employed. Learning the forms and combinations of these symbols is therefore a necessary language activity.

In most schools spelling is wisely taught as a separate subject, the effort being made to teach only such words as are likely to be used in writing. But no speller contains all the words that a pupil needs, and in any case a doubtful word cannot always be quickly found in the speller. There are times when the pupil must use a self-help means for learning how to spell a needed word. If he has not learned by observation how to spell it, he must resort to the dictionary.

The technique of consulting the dictionary should be so thoroughly taught, and so much practice should be given, that the use of this self-help aid will become a satisfying habit instead of being the burden that most children consider it. The preparatory steps are learning the alphabet; finding words in comparatively short alphabetical lists, only the initial letter being considered; arranging words in alphabetical lists with reference to the first letter; discovering that it takes a long time to find a word in a long list of words all beginning with the same letter, and that therefore the second letter must be considered.

For drill, groups of words like the following may be arranged by considering the second letter:

*bend, break, better, bank, border, built, blanket  
cramp, clock, camp, church, cent, corner, cinder, cut  
plant, peace, practice, pinch, poultry, part, punch*

The next step is to discover that sometimes many words begin with the same two letters, and that therefore in an alphabetical list it is necessary to think of the third letter. Children like to arrange in alphabetical order groups of words like the following :

*church, child, change, choose, cheese  
shape, short, sheep, shine, shut  
sardines, sample, satchel, safety, salad, sap, save, sail*

When the children have had much practice of this sort, and much practice in finding words in spellers, readers, or other books containing alphabetical lists, they are ready to use the dictionary. They should be encouraged to earn dictionaries for themselves if the school does not provide them.

Here are the steps: (1) Finding a given letter quickly by thinking whether it comes nearer the beginning, the end, or the middle of the alphabet, and locating it with as little fluttering of leaves as possible. It helps to note which letter comes about the middle of the dictionary. (2) Hunting for a particular word by finding the section of the dictionary devoted to the initial concerned. (3) Noting the second letter of the word, and in accordance with its position in the alphabet, locating the pages where it will be likely to occur. (4) Studying the guide words and finding the exact page. (5) Last of all, finding the word on the page.

It is well not to teach the use of the dictionary for pronouncing purposes until a real need for such help develops. This use of the dictionary involves introducing the pupils to the key words at the foot of each page. Call attention to the fact that the vowels have many different sounds, and that the dictionary uses a special mark to indicate each of these

sounds ; the same mark is found in a short, simple word at the foot of the page, and this reveals the sound of the letter. While some diacritical marks are used for consonants, they are of slight importance, because dictionaries usually indicate any consonant sound other than the most common one by spelling the word phonetically.

The use of the dictionary for finding the meanings of words involves reading all the definitions and selecting the one that seems best to fit the sentence in which the unfamiliar word occurs.

A very important use of the dictionary is concerned with vocabulary growth. Not later than the seventh grade, the pupils should begin to make somewhat fine distinctions in the meanings of words. This leads to the study of synonyms. Show the children how a large dictionary indicates synonyms, so that they can often find a better word for expressing an idea than the one that first occurs to them. This is one self-help method of accumulating a stock of expressive words.

Sooner or later, the pupils should investigate a large dictionary and discover all the kinds of help it gives, so that they may use it whenever it will be of service to them.

If the dictionary is to become a true source of self-help, it must be used with considerable ease, but this ease is not acquired by only occasional reference to it. Drill exercises are essential. Here are a few suggestions :

1. Put on the blackboard a list of five words, and see who can find them most quickly. Have the children record on a slip of paper the page of the dictionary on which each word was found.

2. Put a long list on the blackboard and see who can find most words in a given period of time. Have pages recorded.

3. Put on the blackboard a list of words commonly mispronounced, and see which pupil can most quickly find their correct pronunciation. The winner writes the words of his winning list on the blackboard and explains clearly and fully how the dictionary indicates their correct pronunciation.



The G. and C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusetts, publishers of the Webster dictionaries, issue a small pamphlet entitled "Use of the Dictionary — Games with the Dictionary." This is offered free to teachers.

Learning how to use a dictionary with ease does not necessarily develop the habit of using it, and therefore the teacher must see to it that *the habit is formed*. There is probably no better way than by holding the pupils responsible for obtaining the kind of help it gives whenever the help is needed. There is rich moral training, as well as composition training, in refusing to excuse a mistake that might have been avoided by using the dictionary or some other means of self-help.

**Learning to use reference books.** The reference books that any given class should be taught to use are, of course, those that are available. When the topics are alphabetically arranged, the books can easily be consulted by pupils who have been taught to use the dictionary. The teacher should go over the books with the class so that the pupils will realize exactly what type of aid they afford. Thereafter, the use of the reference books not only should be encouraged by the teacher, but should be expected. A carpenter trying to smooth a rough board with a jackknife, when a plane was at hand, would be a sorry spectacle. Just as absurd is it for a pupil to do his work without using the best helps at hand.

**Using the public library.** No specific directions are given here for teaching pupils to use the public library, because of the great variation in size and in procedure in different communities. The library instruction may be given by the teacher under the direction of the librarian, but the best plan is to have the pupils go to the library and learn to use it under the eye of the librarian or an assistant. If this instruction is of the best kind, it will make the pupils self-reliant, and at the same time ready to ask questions when this is necessary. Try

to cultivate *the library habit* by developing strong interests in the pupils, and then showing them how the library will help them to further these interests.

**Learning to use the language textbook.** Review what has been said in Chapter Three about using the textbook. Make the pupils familiar with every part of the textbook — the title page, the Contents, and the Index, as well as the pages containing text. Let them discover how the Index refers to all phases of a topic and see how helpful this arrangement is for review purposes.

As suggested in Chapter Three, train the pupil to recognize review as the first step in studying a lesson that is to teach a new fact, and hold him responsible for the review. The teacher's richest opportunity for developing a sense of responsibility in the pupil lies in excusing no failure that might have been avoided by using all help afforded by the textbook.

In these days of free textbooks, the problem of reviewing the work of a grade that used an earlier book of the series is a serious one. Treating facts that have already been taught as if they were new seems unwise. Even though the pupil has forgotten much that he learned in an earlier grade, he should know that he is reviewing, and he should attack this review much more independently than he would new facts or principles. The best device for review is a summary of facts taught in the previous book, placed apart from the regular lessons, but constantly available for reference. If this review is not found in the textbook used, the notebooks described on page 78 may be used for the purpose. The point needing emphasis is that *the pupil should assume all possible responsibility*. Train him to use his textbook freely for reference. So far from being prohibited from consulting it, as in the olden days, he should be encouraged to look upon it as a good pal ready to help in time of need.

**Learning to apply grammar facts.** The principal justification for grammar in the grades lies in its possible service to the pupils as a means of self-help. This being the case, only functional grammar should be taught. Its purpose is to establish, or to strengthen, either habits or skills. Since methods of teaching grammar are considered in later chapters, the subject is merely mentioned here as one of the self-help activities resulting in necessary knowledge.

**Learning to see.** Observation has already been discussed in the preceding section in connection with errors in written work. It has a still more valuable function as a self-help means of gaining valuable information.

To most of us the familiar too frequently becomes the commonplace. The things we see day after day have little attraction for us, and often are not closely observed. The person who is the exception to the rule finds a world in a drop of gutter water, and becomes a scientist. It is one function of a teacher to open the eyes of her pupils so that they will find in their surroundings something of the hidden magic that reveals itself to him who searches it out.

The language value of this kind of observation lies in its enrichment of the mental life. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The child who learns to use his eyes will never be at a loss for something of interest to talk about to his classmates. The discovery made by close observation affords the richest material for oral or written composition, and at the same time supplies the highest type of motivation — the desire to share with others something of genuine interest and value.

To secure from her pupils this observation, the teacher herself must be on the alert and ready to suggest suitable material for consideration. Plant and animal life; seasonal changes; building operations; all sorts of human activities; the effects of running water, of drought, of excessive heat —

anything that promises to yield results may be closely observed. Then set a time for reporting discoveries. Under an enthusiastic teacher, a class thus handled becomes a group of enthusiastic children eager to discuss and to interpret what they have seen. What better language work can be imagined than such reporting and the discussion it precipitates under the stimulus of a great interest?

Under the head of *learning-to-see* activities may be included excursions and visits to museums, industries, and other local places of interest. Seeing, interpreting, reporting — these are the steps.

#### SELF-HELP ACTIVITIES RESULTING IN EFFICIENCY

Efficiency is the power successfully to achieve purposes. The previous sections of this chapter deal with activities that result in ideals and activities that result in necessary knowledge. This section deals with activities that help secure efficiency in attaining ideals or purposes. Efficiency may be personal or social, the latter being the higher type, but dependent upon personal efficiency.

**The notebook as an aid in gaining efficiency.** The notebook is a means of attaining personal efficiency. It is a well-known fact that in no subject do children manifest so pronounced a degree of variation as in language power. It is impossible, therefore, for a textbook to meet individual needs in a thoroughgoing way. This makes necessary the notebook, which is essentially an individual language book. Its use should be begun not later than the fifth grade.

In a class discussion, allow the pupils to enumerate their greatest language difficulties, and thus discover the wide variation that exists. This being recognized, the value of a notebook as a means of overcoming individual weakness, of increasing individual power, and of strengthening the sense of individual responsibility, will quickly be appreciated.



The stronger the enthusiasm that is aroused at the outset, the greater will be the helpfulness of the notebooks.

*Making the notebooks.* As a convenience to the teacher in handling the collected notebooks, it is best to have a uniform size, whether the blank books are purchased or made by the pupils. If made at school, they should be given strong, durable covers, because they will have constant use. In either case they must be prepared for service.

As far as possible, let the pupils plan the details of the notebooks. They will already have discovered that they have individual spelling and pronunciation difficulties, that they make different errors in the use of words, and that they differ widely in composition ability, both as regards vocabulary and expression. Sections for spelling, pronunciation, common errors, and composition will therefore be desirable. Let the pupils study their textbooks and find out what sort of information the Contents gives. In order that they may find quickly what they need, they will also need a Contents in their notebooks. If they decide to include spelling, correct usage, pronunciation, vocabulary, and composition, they should decide what proportion of the notebook space shall be devoted to each. Some children like to copy into their notebooks the poems they commit to memory, so that they may review them easily. If this is done, a poetry section should also be included.

Arranging the Contents, numbering the pages, entering each topic at the head of the page on which it begins, and writing the name and address of the owner of the notebook in a suitable place, are all matters that the class can plan for themselves. Let them discuss freely the questions that arise, and in each case decide what to do only after the matter at issue has been considered from every point of view. This discussion affords valuable language practice, because it is concerned with a real situation, and decisions must be reached just as a group of business men would reach them.

*Spelling.* Each pupil should be trained to write in its proper section all words that he misspells in any written exercise whatever. These are the most important words for the pupil concerned to fix permanently in mind. They should be reviewed frequently, the review not being left to chance. At intervals, the class should be grouped in twos, each pupil testing his companion on the words in the spelling section of his notebook. A failure to spell one of these words should be considered a much more serious matter than the misspelling of other words. Hold the pupils strictly responsible for these words. When a word has been spelled correctly in five successive reviews, it may be crossed out neatly, and thereafter ignored unless it is again misspelled in a written exercise.

From the outset, train the pupils to take the notebook seriously. The notebooks should occasionally be called in by the teacher and examined, in order to keep alive the children's sense of responsibility, but the pupils themselves should do most of the work. On page 85, where team work is discussed, workable methods are suggested.

*Correct pronunciation.* This section should be handled much as the spelling section is. Words that a given pupil mispronounces should be entered in their proper section, and thereafter pronounced correctly and distinctly day after day. In order to keep the matter in the child's mind it is a good plan frequently to ask how many are remembering the daily drill on individual mispronunciations. The pronunciation may be tested at the same time that the spelling words are reviewed.

*Correct usage.* Children misuse words because through imitation or carelessness they began wrong, and have persisted until a habit has become deeply rooted. The only remedy is to establish a counter habit. A child may know that he says *come* when he should say *came*. He may even

in higher grades understand the grammatical principle involved, but he still says, *I come home yesterday*. He needs to say *I came home yesterday* and similar sentences so many times that the new habit will eliminate the old. It matters little whether he thinks about the sentences when he repeats them. He did not think about the sentences when he formed the wrong habit. The important thing is *to say* the correct form over and over again until the muscles concerned utter them voluntarily. If a boy repeats a correct form fifty times a day, and is careful not to fall back upon the incorrect form, the bad habit will not long persist. But a boy is not likely to give himself this drill unless his ambition is thoroughly aroused. He must realize the importance of using correct English, he must plan to drill himself on his individual errors *every day*, and he must train his ear so that after a while the incorrect expression, whether used by himself or by another person, will have a distinctly unpleasant sound.

In entering in the notebooks the correct forms whose use is to be established, the pupils should use each word in a sentence of the sort in which the incorrect form is ordinarily used. It helps to have the children time themselves and report how many times a given sentence was repeated in, say, two minutes. They should be fully conscious of the purpose of the frequent repetition.

See the chapter on "Correct Usage" for methods of discovering individual and class errors of speech.

*Vocabulary.* In the vocabulary section, each pupil should record words that he wishes to add to his stock. One good method grows naturally out of the study of prose or poetry. After he has studied a piece of prose, for instance, ask the pupil to find words that were particularly effective in contributing beauty or vividness or force to the selection. After several words have been mentioned, have the class select two or three that they would like to add to their working vocabu-

laries. These words should be used in original sentences and written in the notebooks. From time to time ask the children to report what words from the notebook list they have found occasion to use. When the children realize that they are selecting words to use in expressing their own thoughts, they soon select not only well, but with actual shrewdness. The extent to which they profit from the exercise will depend upon the firmness with which the teacher holds them to the task until the use of the notebook in this way becomes fully established, and upon their own appreciation of the value of a large stock of forceful, expressive words.

*Compositions.* It is by no means necessary to have all written compositions copied in the notebooks, but occasionally a composition written as a part of the language work, or a paragraph relating to some other school subject, should be written in the composition section. This provides a means of noting improvement. A series of compositions, the first written at the beginning of the school year and the others at regular intervals thereafter, is a valuable aid to the pupil in estimating his own advancement. He is often interested in writing on a subject used months earlier, in order to see if both his thinking and his expression have grown more vigorous and more convincing.

*Poetry.* If the notebooks<sup>1</sup> have a poetry section, let the pupils copy into this section the poems that they commit to memory. They will then have them in convenient form for review, and this will be particularly helpful if the poems are not found in any book that is permanently available for reference.

*Aims.* In the higher grades, it is helpful for the pupils to enter their good and their poor English stock on opposite pages, crossing out the poor-stock items when they have been disposed of.

A given school may not decide upon precisely the categories



suggested here, and this does not matter. The important thing is to use the notebooks in such a way that the pupils will have a self-help aid in fighting and conquering their bad habits, and a permanent record of their improvement. Every extensive study of composition made throughout the country has revealed the deplorable fact that the same types of error are made in the eighth grade as in the third and fourth. This indicates the failure of teachers in many places themselves to work with a definite aim, and to train their pupils to strive, not for general composition excellence, but for one definite skill after another, holding them responsible at each stage for acquiring a reasonable degree of the skill aimed at.

**Using a language bulletin board.** A language bulletin board for recording in a conspicuous way what for the moment is receiving special attention, is invaluable. If there is not sufficient blackboard space, the pupils can make a bulletin board by fastening together several smooth boards and painting them black. The device can then be hung in a convenient place. Or, better still, cloth surfaced for the use of crayon may be arranged on a curtain roller. This has the advantage of being easily disposed of when not in use. It is probably true that a bulletin board made by the class will arouse more interest than one secured without effort, and the class discussion involved in planning and making it is in itself a worth-while language activity.

The bulletin board is especially helpful in dealing with the mechanics of writing. Imagine, for instance, that the composition needs of the class require the use of the comma in a series. The use of the comma having been taught by observation and discussion, much immediate drill is desirable to establish the habit of applying what has been learned whenever written expression demands it. It is a good plan in work of this sort to appoint a pupil each day to write on the

✓ bulletin board, before school the following morning, a sentence using the comma in a series. A minute may then be taken at the beginning of the recitation period for criticizing the sentence and for explaining the use of the comma. If the sentence is copied later, the pupils will have had effective drill in correctly using the comma in this way.

1 Other uses of the bulletin board are recording the results of team work, listing class aims, and keeping before the class slogans that they themselves have framed. Additional uses will occur to teachers, and also to pupils. It pays to keep before any public the important matters with which it is concerned. The entire task of keeping a bulletin board should devolve upon the pupils. It may sometimes be put in charge of pupils who because of proficiency in some particular line of work have been excused from it for a time.

**Vocabulary building.** This activity has already been discussed, and will be considered again in connection with methods in oral and written composition. A few of the commonest methods of enlarging the vocabulary are listed here so that they may be kept in mind and used whenever opportunity offers.

1. When story-telling is going on, give special attention to the words used, each pupil being ready to suggest better ones when this is possible.

2. Have children notice and report vivid, forcible words or phrases that they read or commit to memory, trying to add to their own speaking or writing vocabularies those that would help them better to express their own ideas.

3. Do not make the mistake of telling pupils to reproduce *in their own words* what they have read. This is precisely what they should *not* do. While they will, of course, use many of their own words, they should at times make a distinct effort to substitute for the less expressive words which they ordinarily use the more exact words of the author. When preparing for reproduction, it is sometimes worth while to select in advance two or three particularly pleasing words or phrases, and plan to use them in telling the story.

4. The teacher's own vocabulary, simple, exact, and expressive, is often a stimulus to imitation.
5. Give judicious praise to well-selected words in story-telling. This greatly encourages the pupil. Train the children to commend pleasing language when criticizing the work of their classmates.
6. In all literature work, show that the beauty or the force or the convincing quality of the text is due to the nice selection of words.
7. Use the notebooks faithfully for vocabulary growth.

**Team work.** Team work is a distinctly social activity. At about the age of twelve, say in the sixth grade, the "gang" spirit becomes remarkably developed. Children like to play and to work in groups, and for the time being they are much more sensitive to the opinion of their fellows than to that of parent or teacher. It is wise to take advantage of this circumstance, as well as of the spirit of competition that is inherent in most children.

Six or eight pupils make a good number for a team. With the help of the teacher the children should form the teams, making sure that they are as evenly matched as possible.

Each team should elect its own captain, considering the readiness of the candidate to take the lead in an undertaking, and not merely his popularity. Teams usually work best if each contains both boys and girls.

When the teams have been formed, the captain of each should see that the members of his team work faithfully for the team in all contests — spelling matches, correct-usage drives, and the like. The teacher may call in the notebooks through the team captains, holding them responsible for those of the entire team. Most children like to work for points, a certain number being given for various types of achievement, such as winning a contest or doing particularly good work in any line of effort. The fact that the points earned by an individual go to the credit of the team strengthens the social spirit.

The team spirit works in close coöperation with the teacher

when she is trying to overcome a common bad habit — carelessness, for instance. If it is decided to wage unrelenting warfare against carelessness, it is effective to have a team deprived of a given number of points for every piece of careless written work handed in by one of its members. The team members will be expected to look over the compositions before they are handed in, and do all they can to stimulate the pupils who are either careless or indifferent. A teacher who has not tried the plan little realizes how hard a lazy boy will sometimes work to escape the scorn of his team mates. He dreads it, and quite naturally, because such is the gang spirit that it will not tolerate any disloyalty on the part of its members. Wisely directed, the team organization is valuable in a school.

**The socialized recitation.** One hears a good deal in these days about the socialized recitation. The term is often loosely used. In certain schools that claim to have introduced the socialized recitation, investigation has revealed that the socialization consisted solely in a pupil's standing before the class and asking questions that otherwise would be asked by the teacher. It matters little who asks routine questions, but questioning to secure thought is a sufficiently difficult task for a trained teacher. To delegate the responsibility altogether to a pupil, no matter how clever he may be, can but be disadvantageous to a class.

True socialization is little concerned with the mere matter of asking questions. It consists in a free give-and-take of ideas, such as characterizes the pupils' out-of-school activities, but a give-and-take that is directed by the teacher toward definite ends, and guided by her in such a way that the end is achieved with a maximum of independent pupil coöperation. The teacher who helps start a lesson and then guides judiciously, giving assistance when needed, but throwing upon the pupil all possible responsibility, need not be disturbed by the demand for the socialized recitation. She has already intro-



duced it. When all has been said and done, the socialized recitation is the recitation that is based on the principle of pupil self-help.

**Class organization.** Class organization is a fruitful means of developing social efficiency, and is a valuable seventh- and eighth-grade activity. It is discussed in a later chapter.

#### FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. In the course of a conference on ways and means for training children to study, a teacher remarked, "Although I did not realize it at the time, my mother, who had only a common school education, gave me my first lesson in real study. It was during my second year in the high school. I wished to make myself a simple dress, and Mother encouraged me to do so, saying that she would help me. Visions of Mother's skillful fingers performing the difficult parts of my task flitted before my eyes, and I anticipated no real trouble. Mother helped me select a suitable pattern, and I asked her to show me how to cut out the dress. Mother showed me by directing me to the printed directions that came with the pattern, and firmly insisted that if I was to make the dress, I must understand the pattern. She helped me only when it was evident that there was no way in which I could help myself. Later, when the dress was ready to try on, Mother arranged mirrors so that I could see the back of the dress as well as the front. I remember that the right shoulder needed considerable alteration. I asked Mother to pin it as it should be, and she replied by suggesting that I tell her how to make the alteration. After a number of unsuccessful attempts, I succeeded in getting it right. At the time I could not understand why Mother did not make the alteration and so save a lot of time and a lot of her own energy as well as mine. I know now."

If you think that the mother described was a real teacher, prove it by discussing clearly her attitude in the dressmaking project.

2. Compare the self-help method of making notebooks described in this chapter with the following: The teacher plans the books, and dictates to the pupils each step of the process. Which method would take more time? Which method would be easier for the pupils? Which is the better method, and why?

3. Make a list of the activities described in this chapter that are suitable for your grade. Plan definitely how you can utilize them

in such a way that the pupils will be required to use all the power they have in mastering them. At what points will the pupils possibly need your help? How can you render this help so that the pupils will become better able to help themselves in carrying on a similar activity?

4. This chapter discusses two ways in which children should be taught really to see. What is the first? the second? What interesting feature of the school neighborhood can you make the starting point in training your pupils to form the habit of observing the everyday things about them? Try to plan a simple project that will make such observation necessary.

5. Do your pupils give any evidences of the gang spirit? If they do, how can you utilize the team idea in your English work? Think of ways not suggested in this book.

#### FOR READING AND STUDY

This chapter deals with a considerable number of activities that are useful in themselves, and equally valuable for the self-help training they give the pupil. Perhaps you can do no more profitable reading at this point than to find in the books listed at the close of Chapter One, or in similar books, all references to self-activity, working with definite aims, learning by doing, and the like. Run through the Index of each book you have at hand, and note all topics that promise to make clear the principles underlying learning in a self-help way. Look up the references and make notes for future use.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CORRECT USAGE

#### INTRODUCTION

**Purpose of this chapter.** Like the preceding chapter, this one deals with a subject that is of supreme importance and that must never be lost from sight during the entire school course. It is concerned with every life activity that demands expression in words, whether it be a game on the playground; a family chat around the dinner table; conversation on the street, in stores and offices, at picnics, or at the swimming hole; or any school exercise, regardless of the subject with which it deals. It is the purpose of this chapter to treat the subject in a progressive way, with the assumption that the methods suggested, or others equally effective, will be used unremittingly until at least the most glaring errors are eliminated from the speech of the classes concerned.

**Significance of the words "correct usage."** The words "correct usage" have a somewhat broad significance. They may relate to either oral or written expression. In the former case, they include the use of the voice in enunciating and pronouncing, and the proper use of words. In the latter case likewise they relate to the correct use of words, and also to the more technical matters of spelling, arrangement on paper, capitalization, and punctuation. Since the technical features are considered in connection with written composition, this chapter is devoted exclusively to the use of the voice and the correct use of words.

#### THE USE OF THE VOICE

**Importance of the subject.** The supervisor of speech correction and speech improvement in one of our largest cities recently said, "Nowhere in the civilized world today is slip-

shod speech so prevalent as in the public schools of the cities of the United States." The remark might well have omitted the limitation of the indictment to the schools, for the speech of the schools merely reflects the speech of society outside the schools. But in any case the school must shoulder the responsibility of improving in some degree the unfortunate condition that unquestionably exists.

**Speech defects.** Speech defects, such as stammering, lisping, and various types of nasality, due to nervous conditions, to malformation of some part of the speech organism, or to adenoids or other forms of obstruction, require the services of a specialist. Many of our large cities now make provision for this work, but the majority of teachers must still assume some responsibility for helping children having any of these defects.

Unintelligent effort, no matter how sympathetic, may easily do harm. It is very important, therefore, that a teacher who has pupils with speech defects secure a standard treatise on the subject and study the problem in a thorough-going way. Several reliable books are listed at the end of this chapter.

**Poor speech habits.** The word *habits*, as here used, relates to incorrect speech due to ignorance or to carelessness, and not to physical defects. While the help of a specialist is desirable in dealing with these bad speech habits, it is not absolutely necessary. Any teacher can achieve significant results by intelligent, painstaking effort. The books listed at the end of the chapter will be most useful. The suggestions that follow will also be useful in connection with both enunciation and pronunciation.

**First steps in securing distinct enunciation.** Indistinct enunciation is ordinarily so strongly intrenched that a teacher must not expect to win a speedy victory. A habit due to long practice requires time and patience for its eradication.



Regular, systematic drill of the right sort is essential. If a pupil finds it difficult to articulate a given sound, — *th* in *think*, for instance, — the first step is to help him to pronounce it. Many children, after repeated attempts, give the sound correctly without conscious attention to the position of the vocal organs. Others must learn to manipulate tongue and lips.

The teacher should practice giving the sound before a mirror until she is perfectly familiar with the position of her tongue with relation to the teeth and lips, so that she can assume the correct position promptly and retain it as long as is necessary. The children note the position of the teacher's organs, place theirs in the same position, and at the same time utter the sound *th*. A successful voice teacher finds it helpful to have at hand a small mirror so that the pupils can see if they actually place their tongues as the teacher does hers. Much practice is then necessary to secure the giving of the sound, by itself and in words, with utmost accuracy and promptness.

**Drill on groups of words containing the same sound.** Drill on individual words may well be followed by drill on groups of words, each of which contains the sound presenting the difficulty. The following words may be used for the sound of *th* as in *think* :

thank	think	throw	thrash
thanking	thinking	throwing	thrashing
threw	thimble	thread	three

The sentences below will help in securing good enunciation, and will at the same time amuse the children in their efforts not to trip over their own tongues :

I threw the thread and the thimble.  
Thank you for throwing the three thimbles.

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Here are some drill exercises the first three of which employ the same sound, first at the beginning of words, then at the end, and lastly in the middle :

### The *sh* sound :

she	wish	wishes
shut	dish	dishes
shine	fish	fishes

### The *ch* sound :

chick	rich	riches
church	much	hitches
chop	such	pitches

### The *th* sound as in *that* :

the	with	brother
this		mother
that		father
there		wither
them		
then		
those		

### The *wh* sound :

when	wheel	whip
where	what	which
white	while	why

### The *ing* sound :

ring	singing	thing
sing	ringing	morning
bring	bringing	evening
run	play	cut
running	playing	cutting
jump	give	pull
jumping	giving	pulling
take	catch	stand
taking	catching	standing

The drill in the single words of any group should invariably be followed by sentence drill. It is important that the sen-

tences be of the kind used by the pupils in their home and school life. Remember that a sound is not mastered when it can be uttered by itself with painstaking effort; it is mastered when it is clearly articulated whenever it occurs.

It is understood, of course, that many classes of words other than those listed will require drill. Vowel sounds frequently require attention, and final consonants are sure to be dropped in most schools. Each teacher should discover the difficulties of her class and attack these systematically.

While the class drills are necessarily concerned with the errors that are somewhat common, the individual should not be forgotten. Give as much time as possible to individual needs, striving most of all to arouse the pupil's ambition to speak in a clear-cut manner, and encourage him to fight his own bad habits persistently. Try to arouse an appreciation of the time loss resulting from the necessity of giving drills to eradicate careless habits of speech. Do not fail to commend improvement.

**How bad habits of pronunciation are formed.** As a rule, incorrect pronunciation results from imitation. At home, on the street, or wherever he comes in contact with people, the child hears the incorrect form, and adopts it as a matter of course. The mispronunciation may be due to ignorance, or it may be due altogether to slovenly habits of speech. In either case, the child hears it, repeats it, and so perpetuates the error.

**The first steps in securing correct pronunciation.** Whatever the cause of a mispronunciation, the difficulty can be overcome only by a process of substitution. Just as the bad habit results from continually hearing and repeating the wrong form, so the establishment of the desired habit is dependent upon hearing repeatedly the correct pronunciation and using it over and over again until it naturally displaces its rival. This necessitates the creation of conditions that demand the frequent hearing and the abundant repetition

that are needed. Here are a few foundation suggestions for use in all grades :

1. Establish a standard by making your own pronunciation a model of correct and clear-cut utterance.

2. Call attention to mispronounced words by giving the correct pronunciation and having it immediately repeated by the pupil who made the error.

3. Keep up the type of correction noted in 1, and also select for intensive drill a few of the most commonly mispronounced words, attacking them at first *one at a time*.

**Selecting words for drill.** Many books give lists of words for drill. These lists will help you if they happen to be the words your pupils habitually mispronounce. *Just, can, white, since, catch,* and *ing* words are everywhere maltreated. It is well to know this and to be alert in detecting these mispronunciations, but first of all a teacher should discover the needs of her own pupils. It is a good plan to keep a notebook in which the words are written when they are heard incorrectly mispronounced. Make a mark after a word whenever the mispronunciation is heard. At the end of a fixed time, say two weeks, note how many times each word is marked, and select for intensive drill the one that heads the list from the standpoint of frequency. The others may be taken up in turn, and the drill on each continued until marked improvement is noted.

**Speed contests for intensive drill.** The teacher pronounces the word distinctly but without exaggerated effect. The pupils pronounce it after her, first as a single word, and then in a sentence of the sort that children would naturally use. After this, abundant drill should be given, not only for establishing a habit of correct pronunciation, but also for securing prompt, unhesitating utterance. Here are some useful drills for the younger children :

1. Have the pupils, one after the other, pronounce the word, the teacher noting how long it takes to go around the class. Tell the



children the result, and then try to reduce the time until the children pronounce the word literally as fast as they can talk. Each time around is a race against previous records, and all children like a race. Have them fully understand what they are trying to do, and that any mispronunciation is likely to spoil the race.

2. Following the same general plan as in 1, use a simple sentence containing the word. The children try to repeat the sentence as promptly as possible without sacrificing absolute accuracy.

3. Have the children repeat the words and sentences in concert, the teacher controlling the speed by beating time with a ruler or some other implement, and gradually increasing the speed.

**Games.** After a number of words have been used in these drills, use games for further drill on the entire group. Here are some simple games that young children enjoy :

1. *The fishing game.* Draw on the blackboard a large circle for a fishpond. Write within the circle the words for drill, using each several times. With the pointer for a fishpole, let the children angle. A fish is caught if it is correctly pronounced as it is touched with the pointer. At the last, erase each word as it is "caught," thus leaving the pond without occupants.

For keeping the score, give each child a token of some sort — a slip of paper or a short stick — whenever he catches a fish. The child who gets the most tokens, wins the game.

2. *The ladder game.* Draw a long ladder, putting on each rung one of the words for drill. Have the children climb the ladder by pointing to the words in their order, beginning at the foot, and pronouncing them. Give a token to each child who reaches the top without making a mistake. Those who make mistakes *fall* and must try again. Give several chances, if necessary. At the last, all who reached the top without stumbling, come down one by one, thus getting additional drill.

3. *The Jack Horner game.* The children enjoy this game because it is based on the old and always popular rhyme :

Little Jack Horner  
Sat in a corner,  
Eating a Christmas pie ;  
He put in his thumb  
And drew out a plum,  
And said, "What a good boy am I!"

Draw on the blackboard a very large pie. Fill it with the words needing drill, and let the children draw out the plums by touching the words with the pointer or a pencil, and pronouncing them. The one who gets the most plums, wins the game.

Should an incorrect pronunciation persist in individual cases even after prolonged drill, do not be discouraged. Some words will be conquered by all the children, and others will be conquered by many. The words remaining unconquered should be introduced into future drills from time to time. After the children begin to keep notebooks, the few pupils who still mispronounce a word after much drill should continue the struggle as an individual one.

After many games have been played, try having a pronunciation match.

On some part of the blackboard write all the words that have been listed for drill. Form two teams, and have the children pronounce the words by alternating between the teams. Each correctly pronounced word wins a point for the team. If a child fails to respond promptly, or if he mispronounces a word, the opposite side wins a point. Keep the record on the blackboard where all can see it. The team that has the most points at the end of the contest wins.

Some teachers have this game played in the old-fashioned spelling-match way, the child failing in any particular going to his seat. The team of the last surviving child wins. This plan, however, is not a good one for either spelling or pronunciation, as the pupils most needing the drill are first eliminated. In the contest described all participate to the end.

After the children have had considerable drill, certainly in the third grade, mispronunciation should never be pointed out by the teacher when this game is played. It is the pupils' business to detect errors. The child whose hand first goes up wins a point for his team. A scorer may also be chosen from the class. Let the children do everything that they possibly can. This is the self-help way.

It should be added that these games are most successful when the groups are comparatively small. In a large class no pupil gets enough chances to pronounce to make the contest exciting. Groups of eight work well. The groups can play successively, or one can play while the rest of the class is otherwise engaged. Another good plan is to have one or two groups play the game each day at spare moments or during the regular drill period.

**The importance of daily drills.** Since children are constantly hearing and using incorrect forms, the corrective drill should be a daily exercise. Three minutes in the third and fourth grades, and possibly five in the higher grades, will accomplish astonishing results. A convenient time should be selected for the drill, and nothing be permitted to interfere with it.

In the chapter on self-help activities, it was stated that children acquire the bad habit without thought, and that therefore the right habit can be acquired in the same way. If a child pronounces *just* correctly fifty times a day for a number of days, he is quite likely to pronounce it correctly at all times, even if the repetition is somewhat mechanical. But without much encouragement, he will not make the necessary effort to drill himself. His pride should be aroused, and every possible motive appealed to for securing conscious warfare against his bad habit. His delight in praise, his desire to please, his satisfaction in success, his social spirit as manifested in competitive exercises — all these and many other motives may be used to stimulate an earnest struggle against bad habits. The whole-hearted coöperation of the child is absolutely essential.

It is sometimes urged that the higher-grade pupils do not care for language games. Everything depends upon circumstances. A first-year high school class in a large Eastern city plays them with an enthusiasm that never wavers, and this is

no exceptional case. If the contest is so waged that it constitutes a genuine game, — that is, a contest in which some one wins, and others lose, — there will be little indifference. But in any case, the play element should gradually be supplemented by other features. How this may be done is discussed in connection with the correct use of words.

The question is often asked, “Should the pupils, particularly the younger children, realize that they are playing the game for the sake of overcoming language errors?” Some teachers advocate keeping them in ignorance of the real purpose of the game, on the assumption that a knowledge of the practical value of the exercise will detract from the interest. Scores of teachers have proved that this is not the case. Does a tennis player take less interest in practicing a weak stroke because he knows that gaining proficiency will enable him to play the game better? An added argument for realization of the purpose of the game lies in the fact that after a game has been played, the children should become sensitive to the incorrect form whenever they hear it, and this ear-sensitiveness should be a matter of conscious cultivation. In fact, every genuine self-help activity is stimulated from within and is necessarily a conscious process.

**Using the voice in an agreeable manner.** Besides enunciating clearly and pronouncing correctly, the children should be taught to use their voices in as pleasant and agreeable a manner as possible. Unnecessary loudness, harshness, and shrillness, as well as inaudible speech, must gradually be displaced by pleasant speaking tones, adjusted to the requirements of the room or the group of listeners. Much time may be required, but a good example and persistent effort will yield results. Good vocal exercises specially designed to cultivate well-modulated voices may be found in books and pamphlets devoted to the subject.



## THE CORRECT USE OF WORDS

**Finding the most common errors in the use of words.** In no part of the English field has more helpful work been done than in that of correct usage. Many important studies have been made to determine what errors of speech occur most frequently. Some of these studies are listed on page 119, and every teacher should be familiar with their method and results. While it is true that the needs of the individual class determine what errors must be eliminated, the fact remains that the results of the studies referred to are astonishingly similar. Certain errors and classes of errors appear in every part of the country, and since to be forewarned is to be forearmed, it is important that the teacher be familiar with the facts. If she knows in advance that the commonest errors are the use of *is* for *are*, *was* for *were*, *ain't* for *isn't*, *come* for *came*, *seen* for *saw*, *don't* for *doesn't*, and *went* for *gone*; the misuse of the inflected pronouns; the confusion of adjectives and adverbs; the misuse of certain prepositions, and so on, she will be more alert to note these errors when she hears them, and will make certain that her own speech is not marred by any of them.

The first step, then, is to determine experimentally what the most glaring errors are. Do not trust to the memory. Keep a small notebook in which you enter all misused words, marking each word every time it is heard. At the end of a specified time, select the most common error and use exercises like the following to correct it.

**An illustrative lesson.** Suppose that *is* and *are* are habitually confused, or that one or the other is troublesome. Begin by placing one book on the table and have the children give the sentence:

The book is on the table.

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Then place several books in the same position, and have this sentence given :

The books are on the table.

Ask John to stand very straight, and then ask both John and Frank to stand in the same way. This will give the sentences :

John is standing straight.

John and Frank are standing straight.

Arrange first one and then several other objects or children in various positions and have the pairs of sentences given. The children may then take charge of the exercise, making the arrangements and requiring other pupils to give the appropriate statements.

When the fact that *is* is used in speaking of one person or thing, and *are* is used in speaking of more than one person or thing, seems to be comprehended, although not necessarily formulated by the youngest children, groups of sentences like the following may be written on the blackboard. They should be read slowly at first, but later the speed may be increased to the normal rapidity of everyday speech. If the textbook contains such sentences, these may be used and much time will be saved. The children should know when the correct-usage drill will take place, and be ready for it every day so that no time will be wasted.

1. My dress is torn.
2. Our dresses are torn.
3. A beaver is a busy worker.
4. Beavers are busy workers.
5. Six and five are eleven.
6. Which story is your favorite?
7. What are your favorite stories?

As a test, after much drill, elliptical sentences may be used. The children insert the correct word wherever a blank space

occurs. The exercise may be oral or written, the oral testing the child's readiness, and the written testing his accuracy when he has time to stop and think. Neither is a substitute for daily oral drills.

It is well to note at this point that not all correct-usage drills would be introduced by a lesson like the one described in the case of *is* and *are*, because the reason for the selection of one form or the other is not always so obvious. It is often best to plunge into the drill promptly, merely calling attention to the fact that a given form is incorrect. This would be the normal course of procedure in attempting to eliminate *ain't*.

**Individual or concert work.** The question of individual or concert work in correct-usage drills may arise. Naturally, concert work yields the larger number of repetitions in a given period of time, but it also increases the difficulty of detecting errors. The best plan seems to be to employ the individual method, aiming for both precision and normal speech rapidity, until the pupils read the sentences correctly. After this there may be more concert work.

**What to do with pupils not needing the drill.** The question of the participation of pupils who do not need the drill is an important economic problem. In the lowest grades, it is probably best to have all take part. The pupils who do not make the particular error should understand that they help by making it possible for the others to hear the correct form. Or, they may act as critics, trying to detect the slightest variation from absolute accuracy. In the higher grades, pupils who do not need the drill should be excused from it altogether. This will enable them to devote more time to some line of work in which they are weak, or to general reading.

**Language games designed to secure the correct use of words.** Language games are very useful for corrective work,

particularly in connection with the common verb forms, *saw* and *seen*, *threw* and *thrown*, and the like. Here are some suggestions :

*What did you see?* The teacher places a number of small objects on her desk and covers them. As the children one by one step to the desk, the teacher allows them to take a single peep under the cover. When all have had their turn, the first child tells one thing that he saw. He says, for instance :

I saw a pencil.

The next child then tells one thing that he saw. It is understood that no object is to be named a second time.

I saw a knife.

When no child can recall an object not already mentioned, the game is over. The child who kept in the game longest, wins.

*What does it do?* This is a good game for drilling on the correct use of *doesn't*. Each child writes on a slip of paper the name of an animal, and on another the name of something that the animal does. For instance, *dog* may be written on one slip and *barks* on the other. The animal names are put into one box or hat, and the other words into another. Each pupil then draws one of each. If the words belong together, as *lion* and *roar*, the pupil says, *The lion roars*. If, however, as is most likely, they do not belong together, as in the case of *cat* and *bark*, the pupil says, *The cat doesn't bark*. If any pupil uses the word *don't* for *doesn't*, he must pay a forfeit. Repeating five *doesn't* sentences dictated by members of the class makes a good forfeit, but the children should decide the matter for themselves. Their shrewdness in imposing suitable forfeits will astonish you.

*The circus game.* This game is designed to foster the correct use of *went* and *gone*, and incidentally gives good practice in using correctly *may*, *saw*, and *at* in the phrase *at the circus*.



The circus is supposed to be in the hall, and its wonderful sights are limited only by the imagination of the child who visits it. The teacher begins :

John, you may imagine that there is a circus in the hall. You may go, and then come back and tell us one thing that you saw.

After John has taken his departure, the following conversation takes place :

*Teacher* : Mary, where has John gone ?

*Mary* : John has gone to the circus.

*Teacher* : Where is he now ?

*Pupil* : He is at the circus. (If the pupil says *to the circus* the error is corrected, and the right form repeated.)

When John returns, the children ask him the following questions :

Where did you go, John ?

What did you see ?

John replies :

I went to the circus.

I saw a clown swallow a sword.

Other children now go, and the same questions are again asked, eliciting similar replies. The children become very much interested in this game, because they like to vie with each other in reporting amazing sights. The child who reports the most interesting sight is accounted the winner, provided he makes no mistake in answering the questions asked him. And while the class have some fun, they also have much valuable training in both hearing and using correct verb forms. The game should be followed by drill exercises, as in the case of *is* and *are*. As time goes on, the children themselves should prepare the sentences, as suggested on page 105 ; or they may read sentences from their language books, if these particular errors are treated, even though doing this

interferes with the order of lessons in the book. Remember always that the book is made for the child, and not the child for the book.

No further games are suggested here, because all modern language books contain suitable ones, and a number of books devoted entirely to games have been published. Several of these are listed on page 119.

Bear always in mind that it is far more valuable to correct a small number of errors absolutely in the course of the school year than to attempt the correction of a large number without really correcting even one. The correct-usage drill should be a purposive activity. The desired result should be *aimed at*, *attained*, and *recognized as having been attained*. No child will long retain his interest in drills that arrive at the house *Nowhere*.

If in any school it is found that practically the same mistakes are made throughout the grades, it is a good plan to assign certain errors to each grade for intensive drill. This plan will not preclude the casual correction of any error made, but it will insure system in meeting the needs of the entire school. Naturally the commonest mistakes should be assigned to the lower grades.

#### THE NEED OF MORE ADVANCED CORRECTIVE ACTIVITIES

**The need of variety.** No keen insight is required to appreciate the need of variety in drills that must go on year after year with unflinching zeal if their purpose is to be achieved. *Interest must be sustained.*

**The need of a more mature appeal.** As children advance in age and intellectual power, the drills of earlier years, even though varied, may seem babyish to them and may need to be supplemented by activities that appeal to maturer minds. The daily drill, resulting in a large number of repetitions of the correct form, should continue throughout the course, but

other activities should be added, and the pupils should assume practically full responsibility for the drills.

**The need of wider social appeal.** In addition to more variety and an increasing maturity of appeal, a stronger social appeal is necessary in order to create an appreciation of the relation between the speech of individual and class, and the general welfare of the larger community outside the school.

It is the purpose of this section to suggest feasible activities to meet the three needs enumerated.

#### METHODS THAT AFFORD VARIETY

Some ways of securing variety have already been pointed out. Here are others :

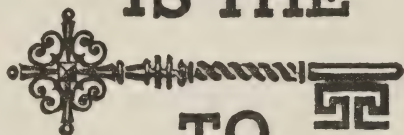
1. Use posters like those on pages 106 and 107. If the language book used contains them, well and good ; but in any case try to induce the children to make them. The second poster was made by a child, and in every school there will be found one or more artists who will be only too glad to devote their skill to the weal of the class.

2. Introduce an imaginative element into the lesson that launches the drill on a new form. For instance, if the correct use of *saw* and *seen* is to be taught preparatory to drill, let the children imagine that they found on the seashore, or in some place appropriate to the locality, a mysterious box. Let each child imagine that on opening the box he found a curious object from some distant land. He will then tell what he saw. The desire to think of some very wonderful object will interest the children, and in the meantime they will have abundant practice in hearing "I saw" and some practice in saying it. This lesson should be followed by three-minute daily drills.

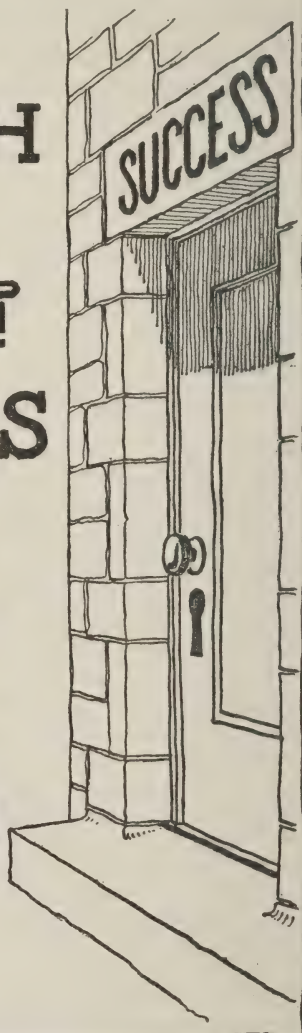
3. Secure sentences by asking each child to hand in at least one good sentence containing the word for drill. These sentences may then be written on the blackboard, a few at a time, and used in the daily drills. As soon as possible, the children should write the sentences on the blackboard or on the language bulletin board, if it is not otherwise in use.

4. Let the children report the number of times they heard the incorrect form during a fixed period, a week or more. This will make their ears sensitive to the incorrect form, and will also convince them of the need of the drill exercises.

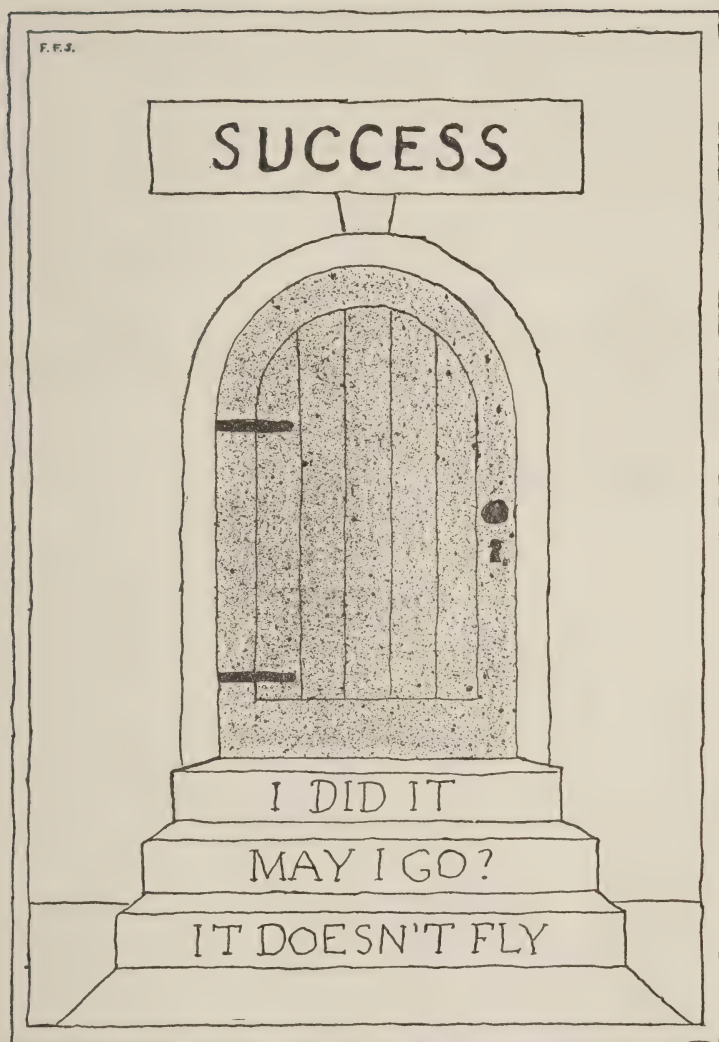
**GOOD  
ENGLISH  
IS THE**



**TO  
SUCCESS**







This poster was made by a boy nine years old. It expresses his notion of the relation of good English to success.

5. Let the children try to devise games that can be used in language drills. This is not difficult for some children. The games will be very simple, but they will be interesting because they are home-made. It should be understood that the game must provide for frequent repetition of the correct form.

6. When certain children give evidence that they have overcome a bad habit of speech, excuse them from the drill exercises, allowing them to use the time for other purposes. Such children might get together in a convenient part of the room, and softly read to each other the sentences containing the words that they actually misuse.

#### METHODS THAT MAKE A MORE MATURE APPEAL

**The language drive.** The following lesson is taken from a textbook. It is used both to show how the language drive would be handled with material provided in a textbook, and to suggest to teachers how to plan the drive with young children when no book is available..

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#### A LANGUAGE DRIVE

Did you ever hear of people having a *drive* to raise money for the Red Cross, or to get members for the Boy Scouts, or for some other important work?

Today you will begin a drive to get rid of the word *ain't*. Many children — and some grown-ups, too — use it instead of *is not* or *isn't*, *are not* or *aren't*, or *am not*.

Read the following sentences rapidly several times :

1. It isn't raining hard today.
2. The book isn't interesting.
3. It isn't time to go home.
4. Our baby isn't a year old yet.
5. My pencil isn't sharp.
6. My sister isn't as tall as I am.
7. Isn't autumn a pleasant season !
8. The Eskimo isn't afraid of bears.
9. Isn't your work finished ?



What word do you use instead of *is* when speaking of more than one person or thing?

1. We are not going to play ball.
2. The seeds are not up yet.
3. Perhaps they are not good.
4. Why aren't the windows open?
5. We are not going to write today.
6. The nuts aren't ripe yet.
7. You aren't as old as I am.

Use the sentences in your three-minute drills for a few days, and also the following groups of words:

I am not	She is not	We are not	They aren't
You are not	It is not	We aren't	You aren't
He is not	It isn't	They are not	He isn't

Should it happen that no children in your class use the word *ain't*, so much the better. In that case choose some wrong form that is used, and carry on the drive.

#### MAKING THE DRIVE SUCCESSFUL

When we try to break up a bad language habit, such as using a wrong word, it is not enough to use the correct

form in the language period. In your number lessons you have learned that seven and eight are fifteen. Of what use would this fact be to you if outside of school you said that seven and eight are fourteen? It is just the same with language lessons. We learn the correct form in the language lesson so that we may always use it, in school and out of school.

### TEAM WORK

Divide the school into two teams. Be sure that each team has a fair share of the children who do not often make the mistake you are fighting.

Keep a score on the blackboard. Each time a pupil is heard to use the word you are trying to drive out of the language, put a mark against the team of which he is a member. While the drive is going on, perhaps your teacher will allow you to correct this mistake whenever you hear it, no matter what work is being done. At the end of the week, erase the marks, give a star to the winning team, and start again.

Try to help your team in every possible way. What is the most important way in which you can help? If you hear any member of your team use the wrong word outside of school, call his attention to the error in a polite way. Remember that you are playing a game, and each one must do everything he can to help his side win. Try to train your ears so that the wrong word will sound very unpleasant to you.

### HOME WORK

Ask your parents to help by correcting you when you use the wrong word at home. Perhaps you can all try together to drive *ain't* out of the language, but do not correct any one who is not playing the game with you.



## A LANGUAGE GAME

## COLORS

One child selects a color. The others try to guess what it is by asking questions. If the color *blue* were chosen, for instance, the following questions and answers might be used :

I am thinking of a color.

Is it the color of Mary's dress?

No, it isn't red.

Is it the color of the crayon?

No, it isn't white.

Is it the color of the sky?

This is the right color, and instead of answering, the child who selected the color claps his hands. The one who guessed the color now chooses another, and the game goes on.

Play the game rapidly. Any children who use the word you are fighting against must pay a forfeit at the end of the game. Repeating five *isn't* sentences given by the class makes a good forfeit.

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**The lesson analyzed.** Note that the series of lessons concerned with the drive first of all explains to the child what a drive is; then it motivates the drive, gives a cartoon that will tend to fix the motive of the drive in the mind, and provides sentences for immediate drill. Next follow suggestions for the daily drills, and provision for the substitution of some other error if *ain't* is not used in the class. Then follows a discussion regarding the general method of forming a habit, and directions for team work, thus making the drive a truly social experience, each pupil giving help and getting help. The coöperation of the home is then provided for, and lastly is given a game that will help to develop the habit of using the correct form.

The lesson might be studied from the book in various ways, but here is one way that is feasible and helpful. In assigning the lesson, — or, in this case, preparing for the drive, — go over the lesson rapidly with the pupils, letting them discover just what the text discusses and suggests. Then assign to groups of children the following topics :

What a language drive is  
The meaning of the picture  
The importance of practice sentences  
How to form a language habit  
A plan for team work  
Home work  
A useful game

It will be the function of each group of pupils to study thoroughly the topic assigned to it and come to class prepared to help organize a drive. They should be prepared to suggest variations of the book plan, if they think it can be improved, and make any additional suggestions that occur to them. The class will then plan the drive, the children taking the lead in all discussion. The teacher should be ready to help steer when this is necessary to prevent waste of time, but she should allow the pupils to make their own plans. She will be astonished to find how competent they are. For instance, the group reporting on the game should be able, without referring to the book, to explain to the class just how they are to play it, and see that it is played in accordance with the rules. Do you see what excellent practice in silent reading and in interpretation the study of this lesson will give?

**Drives in higher grades.** In higher grades the drive may be made much more complex. Instead of selecting one error to be conquered in the drive, the pupils discover for themselves what errors are made most frequently in the class. Tags may be used, each child wearing a bunch. When an error is made, the correct form is written on one of the tags,

and the tag is surrendered to a committee and preserved by them as a record of the mistake. After a week or two, the committee count the number of times each error was reported and the class decide just what errors will be selected for the drive. Two or more teams may be formed and the record of each kept.

Another way is to have a Good-English Week, when the principal work of the school is to correct a few selected errors. Any pupil caught using one of the wrong forms during the week is tagged, or perhaps posted on the blackboard. At the end of the week a program may be arranged. Simple posters may be made by the children, slogans prepared, and rhymes written. Anything that will lend enthusiasm will be valuable. Some classes invite a prominent member of the community to attend the exercises and give a talk on the value of good English. Here, again, it is astonishing to find how much ability to plan and direct the pupils develop. Incidentally, the English practice involved in making the plans is of the greatest worth.

Here is a rhyme written by a fifth-grade boy :

I'm trying so hard  
I should soon be a saint,  
If I weren't hindered  
By the little word "ain't."

When the excitement is over, it is important that the children should not be allowed to feel that the work is finished. Try to arouse a spirit that will desire to make permanent the improvement noted during Good-English Week.

**Getting rid of incorrect forms.** Some children enjoy writing on slips of paper the words that are misused in the class, and then disposing of them by a ceremony — burying them, sealing them up in a bottle, or banishing them in other ways. It is understood that any use of one of these forms means that it has been released from its grave or other place of confinement.

**Relating the drive against incorrect forms to literature.** In the higher grades, the pupils will enjoy making connections with literature. For instance, after reading the story of King Arthur, they will be interested in contests between the Good-English Knights and the Poor-English Knights. Or, they will enjoy imagining that the wrong forms are the rats that the Pied Piper lured from their homes and banished permanently. Anything that tends to make the struggle against incorrect English a genuine and an interesting one is of value. When the drive has been started, the pupils themselves will invent ways of carrying it on.

#### METHODS THAT MAKE A WIDER SOCIAL APPEAL

**Parent-teacher associations.** The school exists for the common weal. Through parent-teacher associations the home and the school are now consciously sharing the responsibility of training the children. Much has been done outside the school to stimulate the use of better English everywhere, and the effect of this common effort upon the pupil is valuable, because it emphasizes the fact that one purpose of using good English is to build up a more effective community life. While in a majority of places the high school has been most closely associated with the community observance of "American Speech Week," the elementary school is abundantly able to enter intelligently and enthusiastically into the project. If a teacher is interested in starting the movement in her community, she should by all means secure a copy of "Guide to American Speech Week," Edition of 1921. It is published by the National Council of Teachers of English, at 506 West 69th Street, Chicago, Illinois, and costs twenty-five cents.

In this, as in all similar activities, see that the purpose of developing better English is kept constantly in view. Nothing should be done for its own sake or merely for the pleasure



involved. Results should be expected, and these results will be of lasting worth.

**Arousing a general community interest in the schools.** Through the daily press, or, in small communities, through personal contact with business men and others who have, or should have, an interest in the schools they support, teachers can do much by stimulating criticism and suggestion. The principal of a grammar school in a moderate-sized town once asked a merchant friend if he had any practical suggestions to make regarding the public school. The merchant immediately asked, "What are you teaching your graduating class?" It happened that one of the star members of the class was accustomed to visit the store of the merchant in quest of fashion papers that were issued monthly. Her invariable question was, "Is the fashion papers came yet?" And yet the girl could pass a difficult examination in technical grammar. She had never been trained, however, to consider that the rules of grammar are useless unless they are applied. If the principal profited by the criticism of the merchant, there must certainly have been a revolution in the English methods of that particular school.

**The relation of grammar to correct usage.** With the exception of the chance allusion to grammar in the preceding paragraph, nothing has been said in this chapter concerning the help that it may afford in mastering the correct use of words. While its value may easily be exaggerated, it serves a very distinct purpose which is discussed in a later chapter. Consult the Index.

#### MISCELLANEOUS CORRECT-SPEECH PROBLEMS

**Another social aspect of speech problems.** It is a well-known fact that children sometimes hesitate to use certain correct forms because so common and popular is the incorrect form that any attempt to abandon it is considered an evidence of snobbishness, or, in the child vernacular, of being

“stuck-up.” A boy belonging to a cultured family said to his mother one day, “The boys laughed at me today for saying, ‘We boys need new uniforms.’ I think they’d run me off the ball field if I ever said it again; so hereafter I think I’ll say ‘us boys’ when I’m with the club, and say ‘we boys’ when I’m anywhere else.”

This tendency to conform to the habits of the group is but another manifestation of the gang spirit that is so strong among children at a certain period of their lives. It is as interesting as it is amusing, and need cause no anxiety to any one concerned. It disappears with many other childish habits, and in the meantime it is important for the knowledge of the correct form to be so thoroughly ingrained in the mind that it will be used when the ideals change and the ambition to speak good English is thoroughly aroused by either practical or æsthetic considerations.

**Slang.** Theoretically most people disapprove of slang, but the effort to banish it altogether would probably be as hopeless as it might be undesirable. It is a good plan to take the children into your confidence in this matter and show them that there are two classes of slang words. There are expressive words that add vigor to our language, and eventually win a place for themselves. Such words are *mob*, *chum*, *blizzard*, *skyscraper*, *quiz*. These words were at first regarded as slang, but they became standard because they were useful and had no exact equivalent. There is little doubt that our language will continue to be enriched in this way as a clever person now and then coins a word that is really needed.

The second class of slang words contains the expressions that are wholly objectionable. They appear year after year, serve for a time, and then give place to a new crop. Such words are *guy*, applied to a person; *swell*, used to describe everything from a toy to a mansion; and *gee* as an expression of every emotion to which the mind of man is subject.

Little will be gained by lecturing the class and telling them that they must not use the expressions. The practical plan is to help them to see that the use of these expressions indicates a vocabulary so narrow that it is inadequate to the demands of everyday life. Select the most objectionable slang expressions that happen to be current in the community, and write on the blackboard standard words that better express the idea behind the slang. Contrast sentences containing the slang expression and the same sentences containing strong, forcible words. Keep this up, striving to overcome the evil by building up a vocabulary that will gradually displace the slang.

In the higher grades a valuable study in synonyms grows naturally out of the attempt to banish objectionable slang. Let the pupils take their dictionaries and see how many legitimate words they can find that will serve instead of the slang expressions. They will be astonished to discover in this way how rich our language is, and how absurd is the habit of using meaningless words when standard words full of suggestion are available.

It may be well also to ask the pupils to name present-day slang words that may sometime become standard. Probably some of the boys will eagerly defend some of the slang expressions of the ball field. In any case, the exercise will prove valuable if it helps the pupils to discriminate between the really expressive and the wholly objectionable types of slang words.

Above all, have the pupils appreciate the fact that good English is a valuable asset in both the social and the business worlds, and that it is much easier to break bad habits in youth than when they have become firmly established by the practice of many years. Help them appreciate also that the struggle against the slang habit must be waged with determination, and that it must be waged by the individual.

He may get inspiration and encouragement from others, but the battle is his own. No one can win the victory for him.

#### FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Which of your present pupils have speech defects? Have you conferred with their parents in an effort to secure for them professional treatment?

2. Which of your pupils have bad speech habits? Which of these habits are general enough to warrant class drill? What provision will you make for overcoming the bad speech habits of individuals?

3. If you have not already done so, devote several weeks to listing the errors of enunciation, pronunciation, and use of words made in your class. Have the children help you. Then plan carefully a campaign of eradication.

4. What will be the inevitable effect upon your pupils if you begin a campaign against a given type of error and drop it before results are achieved?

5. What will be the inevitable effect upon your pupils if you begin a campaign in so interesting a way that enthusiasm is aroused and then allow the interest to wane?

6. Have you a parent-teacher association in your community even though you teach in a one-room school? What can you do to arouse community interest in cultivating good-English habits through the children themselves? through the parents? through the editors of local papers?

7. The Diebel-Sears study listed below states that one of the three most frequent causes of error was found to be carelessness. How is it in your school? Can you escape responsibility for careless habits? What can you do to help the pupils to overcome careless habits?

#### FOR READING AND STUDY

##### SPEECH DEFECTS

SCRIPTURE-JACKSON. *Correction of Speech Defects*. F. A. Davis Company. (Contains many practical exercises.)

SWIFT. *Speech Defects and How to Treat Them*. Houghton Mifflin Company. (Analyzes difficulties and suggests remedies.)



## GAMES

- CHARTERS-PAUL. *Games and Other Devices for Improving Pupils' English*. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, Washington, D. C.
- DEMING. *Games for All Grades*. Beckley-Cardy Company.
- KING. *Language Games*. Educational Publishing Company.
- MAHONEY. *Standards in English*. World Book Company. (This book devotes a section to games that have been tested in the classroom.)
- YOUNG-MEMMOTT. *Methods in Elementary English*. D. Appleton & Co.

## STUDIES FOR DISCOVERING COMMON ERRORS OF USAGE

- BETZ-MARSHALL. "A Study of Conditions in Kansas City." *The English Journal*, June, 1916.
- CHARTERS. "Minimal Essentials in Language and Grammar." *Sixteenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Part I. (This article will prove very helpful, because it summarizes several studies, all of which were so carefully made that the results are reliable.)
- CHARTERS-MILLER. "A Course of Study Based upon the Grammar Errors of School Children." *Education Bulletin No. 91*, University of Missouri.
- DIEBEL-SEARS. "A Study of the Common Mistakes in Pupils' English." *Elementary School Journal*, September, 1916.
- MEEK. "Special Report of the Boise Public Schools." June, 1915.
- MOORE. *Parent, Teacher, and School*. The Macmillan Company. (Chapter III deals with parent-teacher associations.)

## HABIT FORMATION

- JAMES. *Psychology: Briefer Course*. Henry Holt & Co. (The chapter on habit in this book, though written many years ago, is still perhaps the best discussion published of the psychology of habit formation. See also *Talks to Teachers* by the same author.)
- STRAYER-NORSWORTHY. *How to Teach*. Chapter IV, "The Formation of Habits." The Macmillan Company.

Read all that you find on habit formation in any books on teaching that you have at hand.

## CHAPTER SIX

### ORAL LANGUAGE LESSONS IN THE THIRD AND FOURTH GRADES

#### INTRODUCTION

**How to use this chapter and Chapter Seven.** It is suggested that the teacher who wishes to make a somewhat thorough study of the composition work of grades three and four take the following steps :

1. Read this chapter and Chapter Seven at a sitting in order to have clearly in mind the ground that they cover.

2. Review Chapter Two, because it deals with foundation lessons.

3. Review Chapters Three, Four, and Five and select for more thorough study whatever relates to activities that are needed to round out the language work of the third and fourth grades.

4. Read Chapter Eight in order to know what is to be built on the foundation laid in grades three and four.

5. Study Chapter Ten in order to utilize every opportunity for indirect language teaching. Give special attention to the art of questioning and to projects.

6. Study Chapter Eleven to learn how to use suitable tests and measurements in an effective way, and to train the pupils to use them.

7. Study again this chapter and Chapter Seven, and then make an outline that will include every topic concerned with the English of grades three and four. It may be well to include in this outline reading and literature, although these subjects are not treated in this book.

**The purpose of oral-language lessons.** In their out-of-school life, the pupils of third- or fourth-grade age engage in conversation with members of their families, with playmates, with clerks in stores when doing errands, and so on. They ask and answer questions. They sometimes talk at considerable length about the things that interest them : they narrate

experiences; they describe things that they have seen or things that they desire to own; they explain in a simple way how they are planning to make or to do something; they try to win other persons to their own point of view, not altogether by teasing, but often by advancing plausible arguments. In short, they converse; they ask questions; they use narration, description, explanation, and argument. This is all that an adult ever does. The school, therefore, is not concerned with introducing new forms of language expression, but only with training in the more correct and the more effective use of those already employed. *It is the function of the oral-language lesson to develop an improved technique that can be employed whenever language is used, whether in school or out of school.* In this aim lies the only justification for oral-language lessons somewhat apart from the other subjects of instruction.

**The meaning of the word "composition."** The term *composition*, as has already been pointed out, may include any expression of thought in words. For convenience, however, it is here limited to the expression of more or less original ideas in several related sentences. This leaves reproduction, informal conversation, and dramatization to be considered later.

#### DEVELOPING A SENTENCE SENSE

**Importance of the sentence sense.** In all composition the sentence is the unit of expression. For this reason, the effort to master the sentence pervades all English work from the lowest to the highest grades. The foundation is laid in the first and second grades, but in those grades little is said about the sentence. In the third grade the struggle with the sentence should become a more conscious one.

**A foundation drill.** Exercises like the following are very useful, and the children enjoy them. The method is that of contrast, a method that always makes a strong appeal. Whenever possible, use stories actually told by children in the

run-on form. If no such stories are told, the exercise is, of course, unnecessary.

Let us imagine that the first of the following stories was told by a pupil, and that both forms were written on the blackboard :

One day our baby found a knife on the table and he thought it would be fun to play with it so he took it and cut his finger and now he lets knives alone.

One day our baby found a knife on the table. He thought it would be fun to play with it. He took it and cut his finger. Now he lets knives alone.

On reading both compositions, the children will quickly discover that they tell the same story. When asked which was easier to read and to understand, a large majority will select the second. Then let them find out why the second form is better than the first. Ask them what the first thought is. They will readily see that it is *One day our baby found a knife on the table*. Then call their attention to the fact that in the second story this thought has a sentence all to itself. Do not discuss the meaning of the word *sentence*, but use it. Ask them for the next thought, and let them discover that this thought too has a sentence of its own. Follow the same plan with the remaining sentences, helping them to see that the third sentence contains two thoughts, and to understand why it is right to put them into one sentence. Make it plain that the trouble with the first story is that *all the thoughts are strung together into one long sentence*.

Let the children look in their readers and see if the thoughts are expressed in comparatively short sentences or if they are combined into very long sentences. Then let them read the second story once more and see if the voice showed where each sentence ended. Call attention to the way in which the teacher used capitals and periods to show where each sentence began and ended. This helps to establish a relation between



punctuation in written composition and the use of the voice in oral composition.

**The case of the word "and."** The case of the word *and* may well be considered here. Many good teachers try to cultivate a sentence sense by training the children to avoid *and's* in their own stories and to listen for them when others are telling stories. But many other good teachers repudiate this procedure, and their position is well fortified. When a class is habitually told to notice if many *and's* are used in a story, the attention is diverted from an essential to a detail. The error lies not in using *and*, a very useful word in its place, but in not, as a rule, expressing each thought in a short, clear sentence of its own. Since the child is trying to *think and to use sentences in an effective way*, does it not seem wise to *emphasize the thought and the sentence* instead of directing his attention too frequently to the inoffensive *and*? Superfluous *and's* are driven out automatically when the thought and the sentence are emphasized in criticism.

**An individual sentence-sense device.** It often happens that a child may appreciate the desirability of talking in short, clear sentences, and yet find it very difficult to overcome a long-established habit of joining his thoughts. In such a case it often helps to allow the pupil to finish his story in his own way, and then ask him to begin again, but to give only the first thought and then to stop. This is not difficult, and he may be led to give each succeeding thought in the same way. If the teacher writes the sentences on the blackboard as they are given, the pupil may at the last read his story, see that it is told in short sentences, and realize that his voice showed where each sentence ended just as the periods show it on the blackboard. The pupil should then be encouraged to think out his next story in the same way, sentence by sentence, and tell it so in class. It may be necessary to repeat this or similar exercises over and over again, but it well re-

pays the time it takes, particularly if the rest of the class are kept on the alert to help whenever they can. Usually a number of pupils need the same kind of help, and all will profit by the exercise, either as fellow learners or as critics and helpers. *It is primarily an exercise in clear thinking.*

**Why compositions should be short.** Not only in the third and the fourth grades, but throughout the elementary school, compositions should be short. In these lower grades, for the following reasons, they should as a rule not exceed five or six sentences in length; but the children should not be strictly limited as far as the number of sentences is concerned.

1. In most situations, people talk in sentences or in short paragraphs. Few make speeches, and in any case a speech is made up of numerous paragraphs, each of which is in itself a composition presenting one phase of the subject being considered.

2. The short composition makes it possible for the child carefully to think out his subject and consciously to apply all that has been taught.

3. The short composition is the best possible preparation for paragraph work, because it is limited to one phase of a subject.

4. The short composition makes criticism easier, since the listeners can readily keep the whole in mind, and thus conveniently note its outstanding excellences and defects.

5. The short composition affords the best means for reducing diffusive prattling to well-ordered speech. It requires the garrulous pupil to curb himself in two ways — by choosing a narrow subject, and by holding strictly to it.

6. The short composition makes it possible for a large number of pupils to take part during the recitation period.

#### LEARNING TO TELL CLASS STORIES

**A lesson in class story-telling.** The class composition affords an invaluable means for conversation and for gaining help in wholly original composition. Read once more the second-grade lesson beginning on page 22. The method in the third grade will not be very different, but more may be expected of the pupils. They will think more clearly, and

the effort to express their thoughts in good sentences will be more consciously made.

Review also the lesson beginning on page 54, relating to limiting the subject. Then study the following lesson taken from a textbook.

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### TELLING A CLASS STORY

The following story was told at school by a boy of about your age :

Last Saturday I went to the circus. I saw lions, bears, monkeys, and even a pig. The clown was very funny. I saw a dog pushing a doll carriage. I saw a dozen other things.

Talk over this story in class. Be sure to say just what you think about it, no matter what others may say.

In what respect is the story well told? Is it interesting or not, and why? Did the boy try to tell all about the circus, or did he choose one interesting thing to tell about? Explain how a child might tell this story without going to the circus at all. Does the last sentence help you to see the "dozen other things"?

What interesting thing is mentioned that would make a good story? For the remainder of the period you may tell a make-believe story about a dog pushing a doll carriage. This will be team work. Each child will help make a good story, just as the members of a ball team help win the game.

Make the story a lively one. What was in the carriage? Did the dog walk all the way? If he ran, what happened?

When you have decided these matters, several children may give a beginning sentence. Choose the best one for the teacher to write on the blackboard. Build the rest of the story sentence by sentence.

When the story is finished, read it aloud and see if it can be improved.

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## TEACHING THE LESSON

The lesson begins with all books open.

*Teacher:* Today the book is to be our teacher. The title of the lesson tells us what we are going to do. What is it?

*Pupil:* We are going to tell a class story.

*Teacher:* Read the first three paragraphs silently, and when you understand them, take your eyes off your books.

(The children read, and when the majority have finished, the lesson is continued.)

*Teacher:* The book tells us a story. What is it about?

*Pupil:* It is about the circus.

*Teacher:* Who first told the story?

*Pupil:* A boy told it.

*Teacher:* Was he an eighth-grade boy?

*Pupil:* No, Miss French, he was a boy just as old as we are.

*Teacher:* Then we certainly must tell a story just as good as his. Or shall we try to tell a better one?

(The pupils nod, or otherwise respond, indicating their desire to improve on the book story.)

*Teacher:* Why do you think the book gives a story to start with?

*Pupil:* It wants to help us.

*Pupil:* It wants to show us how.

*Pupil:* It wants us to tell a better story.

*Teacher:* I think that is just it. And if we are to tell a better story, we must learn all we can about this one. We will study it now. In the next paragraph are some questions. Read the first one silently, and be ready to answer it. Say exactly what you think.

When the lesson has been introduced as suggested, or in some equally effective manner, have the pupils answer the book questions and respond to the suggestions.

By way of variety, the teacher may ask one child to read the questions and to call upon another child to answer them. Note that the first question calls for what is good in the story. This helps establish a habit of criticism that needs cultivation. If the class have given constant attention to telling their stories in clear sentences, the children will inevitably discover



that this story is told in short, clear sentences. The next question will elicit a variety of replies. Some will think that the story as it stands is very interesting, for even the suggestion of interesting things pleases many children. The adult finds such a list of things colorless. After a good deal of training in limiting the subject to a single phase, many children will agree with the adult, but some will not agree. The child is not the adult. Let a large number express their views, and treat all opinions with equal respect. The child has a right to his opinion, and must be encouraged to express it honestly, no matter what his classmates think. If it is unreliable, time and training will help to modify it.

The teacher will readily see that the question, "Did the boy try to tell all about the circus, or did he choose one interesting thing to tell about?" strikes at the heart of the lesson. The pupils at this stage will already have had more or less conscious training in telling what has been aptly named the "one-phase story," and will quickly appreciate the difference between giving a list of things seen at a circus and telling an interesting story about one thing that was seen.

The direction, "Explain how a child might tell this story without going to a circus at all," may trouble some children. If it does, inquire what children have never been to a circus. Then ask some of these children what things they know are always to be seen at a circus. They will think of some about which they have heard — clowns, animals, and the like. Then tell them that when trying to interest some one in a circus, it is a good plan to choose a story that one could tell only after actually going to the circus. Such a story will be more interesting because it is more likely to be unfamiliar.

The fifth paragraph tells what is to be done during the remainder of the class period. Let the children read the paragraph either aloud or silently, preferably the latter. They will then state in their own words what it is they are to

do, and also what they have learned about story-telling that will help them.

Note that the book next makes a few suggestions for the sake of stimulating the imagination of the pupils. Let a number of children suggest answers to these questions, and then agree upon the suggestion that they consider will make the best story.

The teacher might then step to the blackboard and say, "The book tells us exactly how we are to tell this class story. What shall we do first?" Several give beginning sentences, and the favorite one is chosen to begin the story. The next sentence will be given in the same way, and so on. The teacher should accept unquestioningly the sentence that the majority select.

At the last, the children read the final direction and carry out its suggestion. In searching for ways of improving the story, they should be led to think of its interest, the sentences, and the words used. Often, after a story has been finished, a better word will occur to a child than the one first used. This is self-help vocabulary work.

The class story, rightly developed, offers rich opportunity for a socialized recitation, for it involves the free expression of opinion, the weighing of suggestions and the choice of the best, the asking and answering of questions, and the coöperative carrying out of a simple class project. In addition, it affords the best possible means of training the children to prepare good original stories. It should be used freely whenever a new phase of story-telling is introduced, in order to give a vivid impression of the new feature and to set up a standard that will serve as a guide.

#### TELLING INDIVIDUAL STORIES

**How to conduct a lesson in individual story-telling.** In order that they may prepare themselves for the exercise, the

children should be told in advance that they are to tell stories to interest their classmates. Discourage committing the story to memory, but train the pupils to make sure of the first sentence, and to think out the entire story. With a carefully chosen first sentence to point the way, the ideas will follow each other in their natural order, if the thinking has been properly done.

When the time comes for telling the stories, it is a good plan to call first on some child who is usually ready with a good story, or to call for volunteers. This will insure a good example at the outset. Have the children understand that all are to be busy every moment either as story-tellers or as listeners. The listeners are the critics, and should be ready to tell what is good about the story told and what might be improved, limiting themselves to the matters that have been carefully taught. At the opening of the third year, it is probably enough for them to tell if the story was interesting, if it was told in clear sentences, and if the speaker's voice showed where the sentences ended. The teacher may commend incidentally matters to be taught later, — good opening sentences, for instance, — but the criticism of the children should be strictly limited to the special aims set before them. Review the section dealing with criticism, on page 68.

#### CAUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Simple as is the type of composition considered, the lessons will not always proceed smoothly. Some of the difficulties that will be encountered and their remedies are discussed in this section, and some general suggestions are made.

1. As pointed out in dealing with second-grade story-telling, many children will think that they have nothing to talk about. Such children must be encouraged to use their eyes and their ears, and to discover the interest that lurks in the commonest things and the most everyday happenings. The more the teacher knows about

the pupil, — his temperament, his likes and dislikes, his sense of humor, his home surroundings, — the easier it will be for her to put him on the trail of worth-while material.

2. Some children will not be prepared when the story-telling hour arrives. Treat this first of all as a social matter. If the pupil is to enjoy the stories of the other pupils, he must be ready to contribute his share to the common good. If a pupil is deaf to this type of appeal, it is a good plan to name a time, perhaps just before school closes, when he will be asked to tell a story. In school, as in the home, the individual soon discovers the folly of postponing a task when he realizes that there is no escape from its performance.

3. Children sometimes lose interest in the story-telling, particularly when time is taken for the correction of errors. The remedy lies in destroying once for all the feeling that the individual's duty is performed when he has told his story. The story-telling period is a time when *each pupil is busy all the time*, either as a story-teller or as a critic. Try to cultivate the feeling that *criticism is helpfulness*. It is impossible to help in this way without giving close attention to the story.

4. Since it is not always possible for every pupil to tell a story in each lesson period, various devices may be employed to insure preparation by each pupil.

a. If possible, sometimes supplement the class period by a few minutes taken from the time devoted to opening exercises or a few minutes at the close of school, thus giving each pupil an opportunity to tell his story.

b. Sometimes ask at the beginning of a period how many pupils are ready with their stories. If any are not, excuse them from the class in order to give them time to think out a story.

c. Sometimes ask each pupil at the beginning of a period to give the first sentence of his story. When this is done, the children choose which story they would like to hear first, second, and so on.

d. After the children have had much supervised training in writing stories, a few may each day be asked to write their stories while the remainder of the class is engaged in oral story-telling. Some use should invariably be made of these written stories. Hanging them up for observation is a good device both to secure careful work and to provide material for discussion during a written-story period.

5. Errors will be made, and these errors must in some way be corrected unless they are of the sort that time will eventually overcome. The child should never be interrupted in the telling of his



story. When it is finished, his classmates will act as critics, the teacher touching upon matters overlooked. Important errors of usage should be corrected, and then listed by the teacher for special drill during the period devoted to corrective work.

6. Keep always in mind the fact that the composition lesson finds its justification in the help it affords in *using good English at all times*. Have the children appreciate that what they learn in the composition class is to be applied whenever they talk. The problem of correcting the English in all recitations is a serious one, since it often interferes with the line of thought that is being followed. A good rule is to correct every flagrant error quickly in passing, and to select one other period each day when the English will be scrutinized as closely as in the composition period. This plan lays no great burden upon any one subject, and serves to further the purpose for which English is being taught.

7. Plan always for vocabulary growth. Keep the language simple, but have it increasingly exact and forceful. It is not enough to suggest better words for those that are used. Opportunities for securing vocabulary expansion must be anticipated and utilized. During the discussion that often precedes composition lessons, it is a good plan to write on the blackboard helpful words that will be needed, and have the pupils employ them instead of the less effective words they otherwise would use. The forceful expression of the new ideas resulting from increased thought power demands a constantly expanding vocabulary in which to clothe the ideas.

8. Have much free discussion. It should be remembered that the discussion incident to projects of all sorts affords a rich opportunity for applying the skill gained in the composition class, and for stimulating the active thought processes that alone provide ideas worth expressing. Read once more the section on "Informal Conversation" beginning on page 12, and study thoughtfully Chapter Ten.

#### TELLING STORIES FROM PICTURES

**Learning to read pictures.** Review thoroughly the picture-story lesson beginning on page 22. The method used may be followed in the third and fourth grades, with such modifications as the increased power of the children may require. It is of the greatest importance that the pupils realize that a picture is to be read just as a word-story is. The best

pictures to use suggest a one-phase story, the details being limited to those that contribute to this story.

In the third and fourth grades it is a good plan sometimes to call for stories from a picture without previous class preparation, thus testing the power to read the picture. The pictures should be of two classes, as illustrated by those on the following pages.

**The picture that clearly tells a story.** The first of the pictures tells its story plainly, leaving little to the imagination. It is the pupil's task to translate the story into words, and in doing this he will naturally apply all that he has learned about story-telling in general. The test of his success will be the fidelity with which he interprets the picture and the skill with which he tells the story in words.

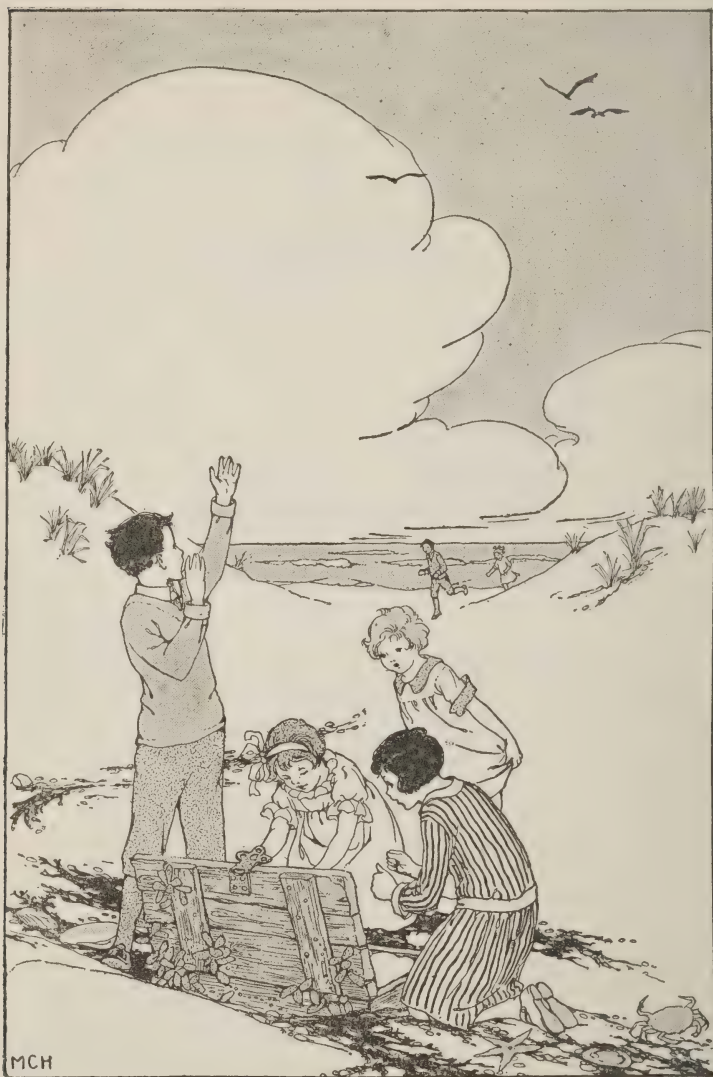
**The picture that suggests a story.** The second picture leaves to the imagination of the children the task of completing the story. The individual who is to interpret the picture must decide what wonderful thing the chest washed up by the waves contains. This is a valuable exercise because it cultivates the creative imagination. Have the stories told without class preparation, and make the exercise a contest to see who invents the most interesting situation.

#### LATER STEPS IN STORY-TELLING

It is a good plan to take up story-telling features one at a time, and to concentrate upon the new feature, not until perfection is reached, but until it is established in the child's mind as an invariable characteristic of a good story. The same characteristic may again be taken up in later grades, but in a more mature manner.

**Giving facts in their right order.** Telling how some piece of work is done at home affords an excellent opportunity for training children to follow a logical order. Let the children come prepared with helping-at-home stories, and note the







first variation from the natural order. Put on the blackboard a composition in which the order is not correct, and let the pupils tell what should come first, what second, and so on. While this is being done, bear in mind that thinking is an orderly process. When the pupil is trying in the lowest grades to arrange his thoughts in their natural order, he is gaining precisely the power he needs most at the moment, and at the same time he is laying a strong foundation for more complex thinking at a later stage.

As soon as the children begin to tell how they do things, the "then" demon makes its appearance. A child tells what is done first, and begins his next sentence, and often all subsequent sentences, with the word *then*. Or, all sentences begin with the pronoun *I* or *we*. The method of contrast works well in such cases. Imagine that the following story is written on the blackboard for criticism :

I always take care of the chickens. I feed them every morning and evening. I give them fresh water three times a day. I crush shells for them now and then.

Ask the children in what way all the sentences are alike. They will promptly discover the prevailing *I*. Then suggest that they try to tell the story in such a way that not all the sentences will begin with the same word. After discussion, they evolve the following :

I always take care of the chickens. I feed them every morning and evening. Three times a day I give them fresh water. Now and then I crush shells for them.

Not only will this exercise result in a greatly improved story, but it gives invaluable training in securing variety in sentence form. When the two stories are compared, the children will appreciate the improvement that has been made. Telling facts in their right order and avoiding the beginning

of all sentences with the same word will become their definite aims in learning to tell how something is done, and the critics will give special attention to these matters. The other story-telling aims, of course, will also be kept in mind.

**Choosing good beginning sentences.** From the outset, some attention has incidentally been given to beginning sentences; but special attention should be given to the matter from the standpoint of enlisting the hearer's interest from the start. Take a story like the following, for instance:

I have a dog. His name is Fido. Fido can march on his hind legs. Whenever he hears music, he begins to parade. He is the pride of the entire block.

This is a story of something that Fido can do. Ask the children where the real story begins. They will soon see that the first two sentences are not needed, but that the third at once arouses interest, and may easily be changed into a good beginning sentence. A good deal of class practice in giving good beginning sentences for stories told by pictures in their books, or for stories of imaginary experiences, — going out in a boat on the lake and falling overboard, for instance, — is valuable.

**Learning to describe.** Description in some of its aspects is the most difficult of the language forms. Only the simple description that the child's actual needs require of him should be attempted in the third and fourth grades. The aim should be to make a word picture that will be as clear as a painting would be. This requires the use of exact language.

Children, like many adults, are prone to use general terms when describing. Things are pretty, beautiful, lovely, and — alas and alack! — “swell!” Here, again, the method of contrast is valuable. Suppose that after Christmas a child wishes to tell her classmates about a new doll that she received for a gift. She says:

Aunt Jennie gave me the loveliest doll you ever saw. It has a beautiful dress and hat, and cunning little shoes.

It is well to admit that the doll is probably a beautiful one, but ask how many really have a picture of the doll in their minds. If some child indicates that he has, ask him what color the dress is, whether the shoes are laced or buttoned, and if the hat is large or small. This, naturally, he cannot do, and the fact that the child who told the story did not make a word-picture of the doll is forced home.

The next step is to ask the story-teller to begin once more and try to make a real picture. With some help, if necessary, she will evolve a story that will help her classmates to see the doll.

Aunt Jennie gave me a lovely big doll. She has red cheeks and light yellow hair. Her dress is made of red silk, and she has a large white hat. Her slippers are made of red leather. Everybody thinks she is beautiful.

The children will admit at once that this description helps them really to see the doll.

For practice, children like to bring toys to school and keep them out of sight until they have described them in class. The toys are then unwrapped, and the class decide whether the descriptions were good.

Other opportunities for description of the simple sort are afforded by making riddles in which the pupils imagine themselves to be animals, fruits, useful objects in the schoolroom, and so on; by projects which make it necessary for the pupils to tell how they think some object to be made should look in order to fulfill its mission; and frequently in nature study by the necessity of describing for identification by the class some unknown flower or bird that was seen.

\*The work in description should add to the pupils' vocabularies a stock of adjectives adequate for the exact delineation

of any object of which they find it necessary to make a word picture. If rightly conducted, it is a valuable means of vocabulary growth.

**Intensive story-telling drill.** It is a good plan to have once or twice during the school year a story-telling week, when every English period will be devoted to telling short original stories, each child telling one every day. At the end of the week, the children will first decide whether or not they have improved, and the teacher will then give each pupil her opinion. As the result of the week's practice, each child not only should have improved, but he should know exactly what his greatest weakness is so that he may try to strengthen it. Review what has been said about *aims* on page 46.

**Further work in strengthening the sentence sense.** All the story-telling lessons outlined serve to cultivate the sentence sense. Another means is that of contrasting sentences with groups of words that are not sentences. An excellent opportunity offers when the children begin to make titles for their stories. As a rule, a title is not a sentence. Suppose children have noticed that the stories they read have titles, and it has been suggested that they give titles to theirs. Let us imagine that they find in their books these titles:

Cinderella  
Abraham Lincoln's Boyhood  
The First Railroad  
The Grateful Lion

Ask the pupils if the first title tells anything about Cinderella or if it simply names her. They readily see that it names her. Then make it plain to them that when they see this word at the head of a story they know what the story is about as well as if the title read "This Story Is about Cinderella." Treat other titles in the same way, and continue the practice until the pupils recognize the difference between a sentence about the title and the title itself. The latter may not be a



sentence, but it answers its purpose just as does the label "Orange Marmalade" on a fruit jar. The label tells what is in the jar quite as plainly as would the sentence, "There is orange marmalade in this jar."

When the children begin to make titles for their stories, an exercise that should not be attempted too early, it helps to have them first give a sentence, and then select from the sentence the words that make a good title. A child might say, for instance, "I am going to tell about an exciting game I played." He is then led to see that "An Exciting Game I Played," or merely "An Exciting Game," makes a good title. And while learning in this way to make a good title, he is also strengthening his sentence sense by discriminating clearly between expressions that are sentences and others that are not, but that serve the purpose of labels.

**Contrasting sentences with non-sentences in conversation.** The study of conversation affords a good opportunity for strengthening the sentence sense by means of contrast. Take a conversation like the following, for instance:

*Tom:* Frank, may I borrow your ball?

*Frank:* Certainly, Tom.

In replying, Frank does not use a sentence, but he speaks correctly. Children should be allowed to use in school any form of expression that passes as good usage outside of school. Insistence on complete sentences at all times produces artificial forms of expression. The pupils quickly appreciate that in story-telling or other narrative, sentences must be used, because otherwise the meaning would not be clear. But in conversation, words not forming sentences are often used. The pupils should understand that Frank's reply, although not a sentence, was correct because it left no chance of misunderstanding.

In drill exercises in arithmetic, and frequently in other

school exercises, the briefest answers are allowable. If in a rapid drill exercise a pupil is asked how many six times seven are, "Forty-two" is a better answer than "Six times seven are forty-two," because it is quite as clear and short answers make possible a large amount of drill during the period devoted to the exercise.

A good drill consists in selecting familiar conversation from readers and other books, and allowing the pupils to find the remarks that are not in sentence form. If they can do this, and can then change each remark to the sentence form, they have a notion of what a sentence is, although they cannot define it or give a logical explanation of its characteristics.

Another illustration of phrases correctly used instead of sentences is found in expressions like "Good morning," "A merry Christmas," and the like. Comparing these phrases with the sentences, "I bid you good morning" and "I wish you a merry Christmas," further serves to strengthen the sentence sense by the contrast method.

#### REPRODUCTION

**Introduction.** Up to this point the telling of original stories has been considered. This section deals with the telling of stories borrowed for the purpose. The telling may be accomplished either entirely in words, in which case we name it *reproduction*, or partly by action, in which case we term it *dramatization*. Reproduction will first be considered.

**The value of reproduction.** Reproduction in story form is a useful exercise if it is not overdone, and if the teacher appreciates both its limitations and its advantages. In reproducing the thoughts of another, a pupil is required neither to select his own subject nor to organize his thoughts in the best way. The ideas to be expressed are provided ready made, and if the matter is worth reproducing, the

arrangement of the ideas cannot be changed in any significant way without marring the story. For this reason, reproduction cannot be considered a substitute for original story-telling.

Reproduction has its own function, however. The story to be retold furnishes a model for both sentence structure and arrangement of ideas. In retelling the story, the pupil will consciously or unconsciously imitate to a certain extent both of these features. This gives him experience in telling a story in a more finished way than is possible in his original work. At the same time he greatly enlarges his vocabulary.

Many teachers err in asking children to reproduce long stories, with the result that the pupils ramble almost as aimlessly as they do in trying to narrate lengthy experiences of their own. If any desirable results are to be gained from reproduction, the children's limitations must be recognized.

**A story to reproduce.** Like every other type of language exercise, reproduction should begin in the simplest way, and advance step by step in difficulty, as the children's power and vocabulary increase. The following story may be used to illustrate three types of reproduction, each more advanced than the preceding. The first and second may be used with third- and fourth-grade children, and the third may sometimes be used in the case of a specially gifted child, who should occasionally have an opportunity to use his powers to the utmost.

#### HOW THE MOON AND THE STARS CAME TO BE

Long, long ago, the sky was much nearer to the earth than it is now. It looked like a great rock. A tall person could reach it.

One day in that far-off time, a woman went out to pound rice. Before she began her work, she took a string of beads from her neck and a beautiful comb from her hair. As she did not wish them to get broken, she hung them on the sky.

Each time she raised her pestle into the air, it struck the sky. At last she raised it so very high, that it gave the sky a hard blow.

Slowly the sky began to rise. It went up so high that the woman could not reach her beads and her comb. The string of beads broke, and the beads scattered all over the sky. After a long time, the comb changed into the moon, and each bead changed into a star. That is how the moon and the stars came to be.

**The question-and-answer method of reproduction.** The first method of reproduction may be called the question-and-answer method. It is frequently employed when children are asked questions about stories they have read or heard, or questions about matter read silently.

The teacher has the story well in mind, and after telling it to the pupils several times, making sure that they understand what a pestle is and how the woman used it to pound the rice, she asks questions whose answers retell the story, errors being corrected whenever necessary. These questions might be asked, for instance :

- Can you touch the sky? Why not?
- Where was the sky long ago? How did it look?
- In that far-off time, what did a woman go out to do?
- What pretty things did she wear?
- How did she take care of them?
- Show how she pounded the rice, and then tell it in words.
- What accident happened after a while?
- Why was the woman unable to get her beads and her comb?
- What happened to the string of beads?
- How was each bead changed?
- How was the comb changed?
- What does the story explain?

It will be observed that the questions suggested deal with single thought units as a rule, and for this reason the method is good with the youngest children. The teacher should aim to get clear-cut sentences in reply to the questions, and should frequently call upon several children to answer a given question, allowing the pupils to decide which answer is best. This answer may then be repeated.



**The topic method of reproduction.** The second type of reproduction may be called the topic method. The teacher may tell the story several times, showing the children that it is divided into parts. The first part tells about the sky long ago, the second tells how the woman got ready to work, the third tells how she struck the sky with her pestle, and the fourth tells what then happened to sky, comb, and beads. Do not expect at this stage any original work in finding the parts of a story. A better way is for the teacher to tell what each part is about and then to say :

May, you may tell about the sky long ago.

Frank, you may tell how a woman got ready to pound her rice.

John, you may tell and show how she pounded her rice.

Jessie, you may tell all that happened at the last.

Let the pupils selected think for a few minutes, and then ask each to tell his part of the story. The other pupils should be on the alert to notice if anything important is left out, and the most conspicuous errors should be corrected. Then other groups may follow, each trying to improve the reproduction. The moment interest begins to lag, the time has come to drop the story, at least for the time being. Children's interest in a story often revives after a while.

It has long been the practice in connection with reproduction to say to children, "Tell it in your own words." The object of this caution was to prevent the stilted story-telling that always results when a child tries to remember the exact words used by the teacher or by the author of a story. It was also considered a safeguard against telling a story without understanding it.

The caution, however, may do harm. The child's own words, or his own manner of telling a story, are the matters reproduction is designed to improve. He should, it is true, use many of his own words, but he should also choose certain words used by the story-teller and substitute them for his own

less expressive words. This is a valuable self-help way in which to enlarge the vocabulary. The teacher may help in this conscious use of words from the author by saying occasionally, "Let us tell that part of the story exactly as the author did. There is no better way to tell it."

The prevention of unintelligent reproduction is a part of the work of preparing for the exercise. No child should be asked to reproduce a story until it has been informally discussed and the teacher is sure that it is fully understood.

**The entire-story method.** The third method of reproduction is the entire-story method. Not all children in the third and fourth grades should be asked to reproduce an entire story as long as this one, but there are frequently children who are in advance of the others, and these children should be allowed occasionally to tell the entire story in order that they may exercise their powers to the utmost.

When the children have learned to read, stories from their books may sometimes be reproduced by the question method, and by the topic method when the parts are short. The number of the parts does not much matter. Take the story of "The Three Bears," for instance. It is much better for topic reproduction than many shorter stories, because each episode stands out with clearness.

But while stories of the length considered should not as a rule be reproduced as wholes by third- and fourth-grade children for much the same reasons that long original stories should be avoided, very short stories may be reproduced, and with such conscious attention to the author's words that the story is practically memorized. Fables are excellent for this purpose. Take the following one, for instance :

#### THE BOY AND THE NUTS

A boy put his hand into a jar of nuts. He grasped so many that he could not get his hand out. This frightened him and he burst into

tears. "Drop half the nuts and your hand will come out," said a man who was standing near by. The boy took this advice and had no further trouble.

Have the fable read silently, and then use questions as in the first type of reproduction. Call attention to words and phrases that not only are well chosen for this particular story, but that should also become a part of the pupil's speaking vocabulary. *Into the jar, grasped so many, burst into tears, half the nuts, took his advice, further trouble* are illustrations. Then ask the pupils to study the story and be ready at a given time to tell it. When the story has been told by one child, the rest should state whether it was told well and naturally. It is a good plan to encourage the children to tell at home the stories they reproduce in school.

To all intents and purposes the foregoing reproduction becomes a memory exercise. Committing prose to memory is a method much used in French schools for improving sentence form and increasing the vocabulary. The method is also used by the best teachers of foreign languages. In our schools it is unfortunately neglected, and yet it is invaluable. A number of fables or other good short stories committed to memory during the third and fourth years will not only increase the child's language power and his vocabulary, but will be a source of great satisfaction during the following years. The fables are worth knowing for their own sake. After they have been learned, they should be reviewed from time to time in order that they may become a permanent possession.

#### DRAMATIZATION

**Introduction.** The dramatization method of reproduction is invaluable because it demands action and conversation precisely as ordinary life situations do. Sometimes the conversation is given, but at other times it is implied and must

be provided by the pupils. This indicates that there are more or less difficult types of dramatization.

**The nature of dramatization.** Dramatization affords training to the imagination, it gratifies the child's play instinct, and it both develops and trains the power to combine action and speech in expressing ideas. It is essentially make-believe. The child imagines himself to be some other person or some animal, and for the time being assumes the characteristics of the person or animal portrayed. He acts as far as possible as the other person or animal would act, and expresses the thoughts that this person or animal would harbor under the circumstances. Under the stimulus of an active imagination, make-believe becomes a real experience — it is life itself.

**How dramatization differs from reproduction.** Reproduction by means of dramatization differs radically from reproduction by means of words alone, and it is well for the teacher to have the difference in mind so that she may know exactly what she is aiming to accomplish and may be able to direct the pupils toward this end. Story-reproduction involves talking about characters as well as repeating their conversation. Dramatization is limited to the conversation as far as oral expression is concerned, all other necessary parts of the story being told by action. Moreover, any given pupil represents only one character, confining himself to the words and the actions of that character. Because several children must help each other tell the story, dramatization is a peculiarly social activity.

**Foundation training for dramatization.** Like reproduction in story-form, dramatization should at first be very simple. Long before a complete story is attempted, the pupils should become accustomed to action as a means of expressing an idea. It will be remembered that in connection with the story, "How the Moon and the Stars Came to Be," it was



suggested that the pupil show how the woman used the pestle and then tell it in words. From the first grade upward, this *telling by means of action* should be cultivated. When the story of "The Three Bears," for instance, is being reproduced by the topic-method, the children should invariably during the first discussion of the story show how Goldilocks sat on the chairs, how she ate the porridge, how she tested the beds, how she started in surprise when the bears returned, and how she escaped.

Many failures to secure free, spontaneous dramatization are due to the omission of this preliminary training. Children should not be asked to dramatize an entire story until the habit of expressing thought by means of action has become as natural and as spontaneous in school as it is outside of school.

**A story to dramatize.** The preliminary work having been done, the dramatization of a story may be planned. Like reproduction in story form, dramatization at the outset should be simple, greater demands being made on the children's powers as their confidence and skill increase.

It should always be borne in mind that the good story for dramatization must be dramatic — that is, it must afford an abundance of opportunity for action and for conversation. Here is a type of story suitable for dramatization :

#### THE MONKEY AND THE BEES

One day a Monkey found some honey in an old tree.

"Ha!" he said to the Bees. "Give me that honey!"

"No," the Bees said. "We won't give you our honey. We work to make our honey. Every day when the sun shines we work, but you only play. When the rain comes, we shall have this honey to eat. So you can't have it."

"You poor little things!" said the Monkey, laughing. "Don't you know that I am a big monkey? You are little and I am big. If you don't give me your honey, I can take it from you."

"No, you can't," the Bees said. "If you do, we will sting you."

The Monkey laughed again and put his paw into the honey.

Then all the little Bees flew at him. One Bee stung him in the mouth, one stung him in the eye, one on the ear.

"Stop! Stop!" cried the Monkey. "Stop stinging me, and I won't take your honey."

But the Bees would not stop stinging him, until he ran away and jumped into the river.

Then the Bees laughed.

"We are little," they said, "but we can sting."

"The Monkey and the Bees" represents the first type of story suitable for dramatization. It is short, it is interesting, it has plenty of action, and the conversation is given. It also affords exercise for the imagination in requiring the pupils to plan how they will represent the tree and the river. Such a story is comparatively easy to dramatize.

**Preparation for dramatization.** The story may be told to the children, or they may read it. After being read as a whole, possibly several times, it should be read as a dialogue, one child impersonating the Monkey and several others the Bees. This gives practice in separating the story into the parts to be acted and the parts to be told in words.

Before beginning the dramatization, make sure that the children understand that they are simply to tell it in a new way. If they have frequently used action as a means of expressing thought, this will seem perfectly natural to them.

The preparation for dramatization in itself affords an opportunity for the best kind of language work. The children must decide for themselves how they shall represent the old tree. One may suggest that the top of a desk will answer. Another child may see at a glance that the desk would not give room enough for several active bees. A third child may suggest the teacher's desk. At every step let the children themselves decide which suggestion is best.

One child may suggest that they need something to hold the

honey, and gradually, as many pupils as possible having expressed their views, the scene will be prepared. A chair on which the monkey will climb to the tree is almost certain to be suggested. The children should also decide in advance how they can best play stinging the monkey, and where the river shall be located.

This having been done, character selection alone remains to be attended to. In the early dramatization, it is a good plan to call for volunteers, thus insuring enthusiastic work. During the dramatization the teacher should stay in the background, but be ever on the alert to note errors of speech so that they may be corrected before a second set of children repeat the play. The children should not be interrupted after the play begins, but the opportunity to suggest a word if the child hesitates should be improved.

After the first dramatization, other groups may be selected, each trying to do better than the preceding group. This repetition often gives an opportunity to draw out the timid or naturally unresponsive child, who will sometimes be reluctant to take part at first, but will be much more ready to do so after others have lighted the way. It must be remembered always that the children who most need the training frequently are the very ones who do not volunteer. Gradually and tactfully many of these children may be led to enter into the spirit of the dramatization.

A teacher need not be discouraged if occasionally she finds a child who remains reluctant to take part in the dramatization itself, even though greatly interested in the work of the other children. Perhaps there never will be a time when all children will enjoy dramatization, any more than there is likely to be a time when all adults will enjoy dramatic expression. After all, it is not necessary that all children be enthusiastic actors, although a majority will always enjoy the exercise. If there is a peculiarly diffident child, to whom

dramatizing is a sort of torture, let such a child take a more active part in preparing for the dramatization. Such a child often, too, makes a good critic.

**A second story for dramatization.** Here is another story suitable for dramatization in the way illustrated. "The Three Bears" might also be used.

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### THE GIANT AND THE SHEEP

Once upon a time a large sheep named Curly-Horn, a middle-sized sheep named Snow-Fleece, and a baby sheep named Lambkin were strolling in a forest where a giant lived. As Lambkin was passing his house, the giant ran out and caught him.

"What luck!" cried the giant. "Now I shall have roast lamb for my supper."

"Oh, do not eat me," whined Lambkin. "My sister Snow-Fleece is coming this way soon. She is much fatter than I am. She will make you a better supper."

So the giant put him down, and he scampered home.

Soon after Snow-Fleece came along the path. The giant dashed from his house and seized her.

"What a fat sheep!" he shouted. "Here's a supper fit for a king."

"Oh, do not eat me, Giant," cried Snow-Fleece. "My brother Curly-Horn is much larger and fatter than I am. He will make you two suppers."

So the giant let her go, and she ran home as fast as her feet could carry her.

By and by Curly-Horn jogged slowly along, and the giant pounced upon him.

"Ho, ho!" he thundered. "This fellow was worth waiting for. What a feast I shall have!"

"But you shall not feast on me," exclaimed Curly-Horn, angrily. Then he tossed his horns, and the giant rolled over into the well. That was the end of the monster.

When Curly-Horn reached home, the three sheep danced for joy.

"I knew Snow-Fleece would get away from the giant," said Lambkin.



"And I knew Curly-Horn was a match for any giant in the land," said Snow-Fleece.

Curly-Horn looked very proud and happy, but all he said was, "Baa-a! Baa-a! Baa-a!"

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This story is more difficult to dramatize than the preceding story, since it makes a greater demand upon the creative power of the children. They must plan the forest, they must select a place for the home, and they must devise some way in which Curly-Horn can toss the giant into the well without being as rough as the real Curly-Horn must have been. There is also an opportunity for more conversation. The sheep might, for instance, make a plan for passing the giant's house one at a time, possibly because they thought one would have a chance to get by unobserved. The conversation after all the sheep reach home might also be extended by imaginative children.

Before dramatizing the story, let several children show how the giant pounced upon Curly-Horn, how the latter tossed the giant into the well, how the giant shouted and thundered, how Lambkin whined, how he scampered home, and so on. The children taking the several parts in the first dramatization will quickly adopt any suggestion that was particularly good.

**A more difficult type of dramatization.** The following story represents a different type for dramatization, and should possibly not be used in these grades. It is put here to familiarize the teacher with the type, and it may be used if the children are ready for it.

#### THE FOOLISH LOCUST

One day a locust and an ant went to a wheat field for dinner. When they had eaten, the ant picked up a grain of wheat to take home. The locust told him that he was foolish. He said that he

himself always came to the field to eat and asked the ant why he did not do so.

One day the locust came again to the field. He was very hungry, but he could find no wheat. It had all been gathered by the reapers.

At last the hungry locust went to the home of the ant and begged him for some wheat. The ant laughed and asked him why he had not stored up wheat for himself.

The dramatization of this fable makes a greater demand upon the children than does the first type of story. Here no actual conversation is given, and it becomes necessary for the pupils to supply it all. It should be attempted only when the pupils have gained considerable freedom in expressing their thoughts.

The story should either be told to the children or be read to them. After it is familiar, the class may be shown that it does not tell what the insects said to each other — that is, it does not give their words. Ask the children what the ant and the locust probably said when they first met, and what they might have talked about while eating dinner, when they were going home, and when the locust came to the ant's house. The best suggestions for the conversation might be written on the blackboard, and read once more before the dramatization is attempted. The children should see that they are going to tell the story that they read, or that was read to them, but they are going to tell it much more fully.

The value of this sort of dramatization after the class is ready for it cannot well be overestimated. It gives an opportunity for the children to express themselves in their own words, with little suggestion from book or teacher. The imagination is called into play, and genuine creative work is required.

A useful type of dramatization may be associated with the teaching of good manners. Let the children imagine themselves meeting each other on the street, asking one another

for some kind of help, leaving the room with an older person, entering street cars, and in fact in any situations that require courteous consideration of other persons. The children themselves can suggest the circumstances and plan how to dramatize the incident. At the close of this chapter is a reference to a pamphlet that will give much help in this kind of dramatization.

#### CAUTIONS, REMINDERS, AND FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

1. Do not ask the pupils to reproduce all, or most of, the stories they read or the stories that are told to them. A child's pleasure in a story is often clouded by the knowledge that he will be expected to reproduce it. Many stories should be told for the pure pleasure they will afford the children, and for the unconscious growth of vocabulary that they will make possible. It is sometimes a good plan to tell the class in advance that a certain story is to be reproduced later. This gives them an opportunity to devote some attention to the form of the story, and if they consciously try to remember some of the conversation in order to use it later, so much the better. Imitation is the leading activity in learning to use language freely and effectively.

2. The stories for reproduction in words should be short. Those for dramatization may be longer, as the descriptive part of the story — that is, the part containing no conversation — need not be reproduced in words.

3. Provide, whenever possible, a motive for repeating the reproduction of a story. Sometimes it may happen that a pupil was absent from school when the story was originally produced. Repeating the word-story or the dramatization for this child when he returns to school will invariably secure the most spirited work of which the children are capable, and will at the same time strengthen the social spirit. Or the dramatization may be repeated for another grade, or the principal may be invited to visit the room and be entertained. Occasionally a dramatization may be carefully prepared to serve as part of a school entertainment.

4. In carrying out the previous suggestion, do not let dramatization become merely a mode of entertainment, legitimate as this may occasionally be. Many of the pupils will never act with great spontaneity, but they need the training more than do those who are

naturally free in their play and lacking in self-consciousness. It is but natural that the best actors be selected when entertainment is the chief motive. Abundant opportunity must be afforded at other times for the less gifted children to dramatize.

5. The teacher will often note a tempting opportunity for introducing a thought of her own. She must learn to refrain from doing this, unless she can suggest the idea to the children's minds in such a manner that apparently it originates with them. The best that the children can produce without leading suggestions from the teacher is the ideal reproduction or dramatization to secure. It may be crude, — in fact, it will be crude, — but it is more valuable for the child than a more finished production whose details are suggested by the teacher.

6. Make a collection of stories particularly good for reproduction either in words or by means of dramatization. The larger the stock, the better it will be. Classes vary in ability, and a large collection affords an opportunity to select with special attention to class needs.

7. Occasionally it is a good plan for the teacher to take some part in the dramatization. In doing this, she should not strive to confine herself to the children's vocabulary, provided her meaning is perfectly apparent. At other times the teacher's rôle is that of a responsible looker-on, who is to interfere as little as possible, but is to be ever ready to give required help in such a way that the children will learn to help themselves.

8. Remember that you will not do your best teaching in any line unless you have a definite aim for every exercise. You may sometimes suggest dramatization for the sake of improving familiar conversation; sometimes it may be introduced as an aid in interpreting a story; again its object may be to improve sentence structure or to teach certain idioms that recur frequently in the story concerned. If you have one leading object always, and in your criticism and constructive suggestion limit yourself in the main to that, your chances for accomplishing something worthy of your effort are greatly increased. *Have a definite aim.*

On page 43 is a list of books containing good stories. A few of these should be in the possession of every teacher of young children whenever it is possible. These, and stories from other sources, should be studied with a view to determining their most valuable use. Some will be good most of



all for story-telling for the pleasure they afford, some for reproduction in words, and others for dramatization. It is a good plan to classify the stories collected on the basis of the function that each is best fitted to perform.

#### FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. If you have never done so, make a list of the various motives to which you may appeal for making oral story-telling a *real experience* instead of merely a means of gaining language power.

2. How do the best compositions your pupils produce compare with the standards given in any of the books listed at the close of this chapter? Shall you consider these standard compositions as models to be imitated, attainments to be surpassed, or simply as a means of comparing the work of your own class with that of other schools of the same grade?

3. If you teach in a country school and have many classes, have you tried largely reducing the number for composition teaching? Why is it more possible to combine classes for this work than for some other subjects? In making such combinations, shall you consider individual capacity or class lines?

4. As your class improves in composition, shall you increase or diminish the number of oral compositions required? Why?

5. What will be the inevitable effect upon your pupils if you do not expect the power gained in the oral English class to transfer to all other occasions requiring expression in words?

6. What will be the inevitable effect upon your pupils of not expecting and requiring steady improvement?

7. Have you tried having your pupils give periodical reports of their own improvement? Why is this a valuable exercise?

#### FOR READING AND STUDY

The books and pamphlets listed below as a rule are concerned with the entire elementary course. When no chapters are indicated, consult the Index of the book in order to find what you wish.

CARPENTER, BAKER, AND SCOTT. *The Teaching of English*. Longmans, Green & Co.

CHUBB. *The Teaching of English*. The Macmillan Company.

KENDALL-MIRICK. *How to Teach the Fundamental Subjects*. Houghton Mifflin Company.

- KLAPPER. *The Teaching of English*. D. Appleton & Co.
- LEONARD. *English Composition as a Social Problem*. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- McNAUGHT. *Training in Courtesy*. Bureau of Education, Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C.
- Twentieth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*. Part I, Chapter III, "New Materials of Instruction for Grades IV, V, and VI."
- WILSON. *The Motivation of School Work*, Chapter VI. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- YOUNG-MEMMOTT. *Methods in Elementary English*. D. Appleton & Co.

Consult the following periodicals whenever you have an opportunity to do so. All will be found helpful. The teaching of English is being steadily modified, and it is in these leading educational journals that the most helpful material often appears.

- Elementary English Review*. 7450 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.
- Elementary School Journal*. University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.
- Journal of Educational Method*. World Book Company, Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York.
- Teachers College Record*. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, N. Y.
- Yearbooks of the National Society for the Study of Education*. Public School Publishing Company, Bloomington, Illinois.

#### STANDARDS IN COMPOSITION

- MAHONEY. *Standards in English*. World Book Company.
- SAVITZ, BATES, AND STARRY. *Composition Standards*. Hinds, Hayden & Eldredge, Inc.
- SHERIDAN. *Speaking and Writing English*. Benjamin H. Sanborn & Co.

Consult also the books listed at the close of Chapters Ten and Eleven.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### WRITTEN COMPOSITION IN THE THIRD AND FOURTH GRADES

#### INTRODUCTION

**Results of a written-composition investigation.** Some years ago, as part of a study of language problems in the elementary school, several thousand compositions were collected from a large number of cities and rural communities in thirteen states, representing every section of our country. Each teacher contributing was asked to observe certain simple regulations designed to insure uniform conditions, and to forward five compositions that represented the average ability of her class, two that were above average, and two that were below average.

Much good work was secured, and valuable suggestions were derived from it. But a large number of compositions revealed a deplorable weakness in written expression. Some of the outstanding features of these compositions were as follows:

1. There was a lack of the spontaneity and childlikeness that usually appear in children's compositions that relate personal experiences. This was evidently due to the nature of the subject chosen by the pupils, or suggested to them. It may also have been due to a lack of interest in writing, or to the absence of an adequate motive.

2. Many of the compositions were very long, even those written by third- and fourth-grade children often filling a large sheet of composition paper.

3. The subjects were so broad that the compositions were little more than collections of miscellaneous ideas but slightly organized.

4. There was little evidence that the work was based on oral composition. The sentences were of the long, run-on type that indicates a lack of clear thinking.

5. The arrangement on paper was poor. Margins and indentation appeared here and there, but large numbers of compositions were guiltless of these fundamentals of form.

6. Certain types of error appeared repeatedly, showing how bad habits were being strengthened and perpetuated.

7. Many of the compositions ended abruptly, often in the middle of a sentence, the end of the period evidently having arrived when the composition was at this stage. A composition was not recognized as a product that has an end as well as a beginning.

8. Many of the papers were carelessly written. On the part of the pupil, this indicated a lack of pride and satisfaction in producing good work, and on that of the teacher, the unfortunate habit of accepting work that does not represent genuine effort.

**The remedy for these conditions.** Should a teacher receive a class whose written work is of the sort described, she will naturally seek at once for a remedy. A thoroughly tested method is to drop written composition for a time, but to do so without discouraging the pupils. Severe criticism of the work is unwise. Perhaps it is enough to suggest that in the higher grade better work is naturally expected, and that therefore time will be taken to get ready for this improved work. If the pupils apparently do not notice that written work is dropped, nothing whatever need be said about the omission.

For a time emphasize oral composition, appealing to all the normal child motives for arousing interest. Continue this work until the children can relate an interesting experience of their own with some degree of pleasure, and with a reasonable regard for the use of short, clear sentences. While this method may seem somewhat drastic, it is very effective. So far from retarding progress, it inhibits the strengthening of bad habits already formed, and insures the healthy growth that is possible only when foundations are wisely and securely laid, when the pupils are genuinely interested in their work and have well-defined ideals, and when from the start they are held responsible for doing their best to attain these ideals.

When the time seems to be ripe for transferring to written expression the oral power acquired, it is well to begin teaching



written composition in the simple, systematic way described in the remainder of this chapter.

#### PROGRESSIVE STEPS IN WRITTEN COMPOSITION

**The relation between oral and written composition.** Since oral and written language are simply two different mediums for expressing thought, all instruction designed to improve expression by means of the spoken word is likewise a preparation for the use of written symbols. The thinking that must precede having something worth saying, and the thinking that results in saying it in the most effective way, are the same whether ultimately the thought is to be expressed in spoken or in written words. The preceding chapter, therefore, has its own immediate purpose, and at the same time provides the foundation for this chapter.

**The specific problem in written composition.** The specific problem attached to written composition is largely a mechanical one. The pupils must master a new set of forms, the term *forms* including all matters of arrangement, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing.

As a matter of fact, the foundation will usually have been laid in the second grade. But the second-grade work is small in amount and narrow in range, and is supervised with the most scrupulous care, every effort being made to cultivate right habits by eternal vigilance on the part of the teacher. The work is largely safeguarded *from without*. Beginning with the third grade, self-help methods should gradually come more and more to the front, initiative and safeguarding being increasingly derived *from within*.

#### COPYING

**Introduction.** Copying is the logical first step in the series of self-help writing activities, since it provides the thoughts to be expressed, and makes it possible for the pupil to con-

concentrate his attention for the time being on matters of form. The habit of observing the common requirements of form should be acquired early, in order that later the pupil may be free to devote his attention largely to the thought he is trying to express. But copying for the sake of copying is dreary work for the child, and it should therefore be motivated, as was suggested in connection with the foundation work. Read carefully what is said on this point in Chapter Two, and appeal to similar motives in the third grade.

**Teaching how to copy.** The ordinary course of procedure has been to tell the pupils to "copy the sentence just as it is in the book." This direction is mainly responsible for the word-by-word, or even letter-by-letter, copying that prevails. Below are some suggestions for more effective ways of teaching children to copy.

*Cultivate an appreciation of good appearance.* If an outworn book is at hand, cut out several type pages and ask the children if they like the appearance of these pages as well as that of the pages with a frame of blank paper. They readily get the point, and invariably vote for the margins. Then suggest that their written work will look better with margins than without. Decide by class discussion how wide the margins shall be for the kind of paper to be used; how much space shall be left at the top of the sheet, how much at the left, and how much at the foot. The pupils will soon discover that it is not possible to keep an even right margin, but the teacher should insist that there must be no crowding at the end of the line. Although somewhat irregular, the right margin should not be wanting.

There are certain matters regarding which there is a difference of opinion among good teachers. Some think that the habit of leaving margins will be most readily formed if at first the margins are ruled. Others assert that children give no genuine thought to the margin when it is ruled, and

the margin merely serves as a crutch. When the crutch is withdrawn, the pupil is helpless. It has been convincingly demonstrated that if the responsibility for margins is thrown upon the children at the outset, they will gradually acquire skill in leaving a left-hand margin that is fairly regular, and will remember to leave the required space at the top and the foot of the page. Children grow rapidly when reasonable responsibility is laid upon them.

*Teach the pupils how to study the matter to be copied.* Let us suppose that the following sentences have been developed in an oral exercise, and written on the blackboard :

Our teeth are good friends.  
We must always keep them clean.

Before beginning to copy the first sentence, the class may study it in accordance with the directions given below. If these or similar directions do not appear in the language books used, they should be written on the blackboard. Or, if blackboard space is limited, they may be given one at a time as the teacher works with the class. There is, however, a great advantage in having the direction before the pupils and in training them to interpret and follow them whenever they copy. This is the self-help way.

1. Read the sentence and be sure of its meaning.
2. Answer the following questions :
  - With what kind of letter does the sentence begin?
  - Does the sentence tell something or does it ask something?
  - What mark is used at the end?
3. Study any words you do not know how to spell.
4. Read the entire sentence once more.

When teacher and class together have taken these steps one by one, the children write the first sentence without again looking at the blackboard. The second sentence will then be studied and written in the same way.

*Have each child carefully go over his work, and make any correction that is necessary.* Strive from the first to have the pupils find their own mistakes, because it is a part of their legitimate work and because hunting for the mistakes necessitates the close scrutiny that results in a clear mental picture.

While mistakes will be made by some children in spite of all precautions, keep the motive for copying before the children, thus stimulating them to do their best because it is being done for some other person's use. As time goes on, the children should also become conscious of the waste of time and effort involved in doing a second time what might better have been done right in the first place.

*Teach the children to place their names well.* When the name is written at the left at the head of the paper, there will be little difficulty if the margin habit is cultivated. If, however, the name is written below the sentences, it is more difficult to start it in the right place. As names differ in length, some practice will be necessary. Let each pupil take a sheet of blank paper and experiment with his name. When he succeeds in placing it so that it looks well, a margin being left at the right, ask him to notice where the name begins, and thereafter always begin at the same point.

*Train the pupils to write plainly.* No teacher is likely to overlook the importance of writing plainly. Let the children understand that whenever they write, some one will read their words, and that the more plainly the words are written, the easier it will be to read them. Writing plainly is a form of social service.

#### DEVELOPING A PARAGRAPH SENSE

**The nature of a paragraph.** Because of the difficulties involved in expressing thoughts in writing, it is customary in many schools to allow second-grade children to write related



sentences one below the other. In the third grade this habit should be abandoned.

The foundation of the paragraph sense has already been laid in connection with oral composition, because the short story with a limited subject forms a perfect paragraph. To impress this upon children, it is helpful to write on the black-board one of the short stories told from a picture, and then by way of contrast several sentences relating to the same picture, but expressing thoughts that are unrelated. Have the children decide which set of sentences tells a story, and then notice that these sentences are written one after the other, and that the first line is indented. Let these two characteristics be recognized as the symbols of a written paragraph, and have it understood that the paragraph form is used only when writing sentences that help each other tell a story. The sentences in a paragraph form a family, all the sentences being related. While the children at this stage will write but a single paragraph, let them find in their readers various stories, and see how indenting makes it plain where a new paragraph begins.

As soon as the paragraph idea has been developed, class stories produced as an oral exercise may be copied, each sentence being first studied as already suggested.

**Motivated exercises in copying stories.** To some children practice in writing is drudgery. While this is not wholly avoidable, anything that can be done to infuse interest and enthusiasm will be of great value. Fortunately a majority of young children are willing and glad to work when they have a genuine object for doing so. Even the purpose of copying stories in order to make it easier to write original stories is sufficient for some, but other motives should also be used. The stories, written under supervision, and corrected if necessary, may be used in various ways that appeal to children. Here are a few suggestions :

1. The best may be selected to be hung up in the schoolroom as models for other children, or to be given to pupils as individual models.

2. The stories may be sent to a second grade to be read.

3. They may be sent to the principal or supervisor. A word of reply from the recipient will have much weight, particularly if that person expresses a desire to see later a set of original stories from the same class.

4. The stories of each pupil may be preserved and fastened together to form a little book. If this is done, the children should be trained to watch for improvement and to report progress.

5. The stories that are carefully written may be taken home so that parents and other members of the family may read them.

**The importance of good models of written work.** Models should be freely used. If necessary at first, the teacher may write a short paragraph perfectly placed, and hang it up after all have looked at it carefully. Soon, however, the best work of the children themselves should be substituted, and each child should have a model for his individual use. The model should always be scrutinized before beginning a written exercise. It is a good plan also to ask the pupils to state just what matters they are to keep in mind — margins, indention, placing of the name, and the careful study of each sentence before it is copied.

Every teacher knows that it is no easy matter to hold young children to persistent effort. It takes time and determination to do things in the right way at the start, but it costs more time, and discouragement as well, to break up bad habits after they are formed. It cannot be too strongly urged that the early written work be closely supervised, and this day after day without intermission. To assign it as "busy work" invites disaster. When the preparations for the lesson have been made, and the children have begun to write, the teacher should pass up and down the aisles, quickly scan the work of each pupil, and call his attention to any

error, not by pointing it out, but by suggesting comparison with the model from which he is working. Throw all possible responsibility on the pupil, but let no type of error acquire momentum before being discovered. After the paragraph has been copied and corrected by the pupil, the teacher should refuse to accept it if margins, indention, and other matters of arrangement have been forgotten, or if the work is carelessly done. If the teacher keeps her requirements well within the ability of the class, and then expects careful work, she is likely to get it; if she fails in these respects, she is almost certain to produce a crop of bad habits that will handicap the children in a very serious way. And children like to be held responsible. In any case, character building and learning to write are both involved, and neither must be neglected.

**Copying as a basis for letter writing.** While in some second grades short, simple notes will be written, in every third grade there will be pupils who have had no such training, and therefore notes may well be used in the early copying work. At a later period, letters may sometimes be written for practice, this being a legitimate motive, but at this early stage the note should always be a genuine communication. Here is a note that was written to the drawing teacher by a third-grade class:

Dear Miss Smith,

Last Thursday we drew pictures for our stories. They are hanging up in our room. Will you please come tomorrow to see them?

The Third Grade

The children will find many occasions for genuine letter writing if they are led to plan their own activities. They may invite parents to a school entertainment; they may challenge another grade to a spelling match or other contest;

they may write to an absent pupil, or to special teachers as illustrated above. Deciding what shall go into the note involves informal class discussion that is in itself very valuable. The children suggest, discuss the various possibilities, and decide what shall be written.

As the note is built up sentence by sentence, the teacher writes it on the blackboard, calling special attention to the punctuation required. Each child then copies the note, carefully compares it with the blackboard copy, and rewrites it if necessary. The copy considered best by a committee of children working in conjunction with the teacher is sent by messenger; or, in case of an invitation to an entertainment, each child delivers the one he writes to the person he wishes to invite.

#### DICTATION

**Studied dictation.** Very simple dictation may be begun as soon as enough copying has been done to familiarize the pupils with the necessary forms. The matter to be dictated should be studied just as if it were to be copied. The sentences should be so short that the children can carry them in mind without difficulty. They should be dictated as wholes, and as a rule only once. As when copying, the children should correct their own work, exchanging papers only after they have developed facility in detecting errors. This is the self-help way.

**Unstudied dictation.** In the fourth grade, unstudied dictation may occasionally be given. The matter should be similar to that used for studied dictation. Any words that the children do not know how to spell should be written on the blackboard. It is a good plan to read an unstudied dictation exercise at the outset as a whole, in order that the pupils may determine whether the matter is to be written in separate-sentence or in paragraph form.



## WRITING ORIGINAL STORIES

**The oral foundation of written composition.** When sufficient preliminary work has been done to warrant the expectation of creditable results, original written composition work may be begun. If the composition is to be a story, it may first be told orally. If the children have learned to describe simply, and riddles are to be written, a riddle may be worked out in class as a suggestion of the way to go to work. It is a safe course to leave no opportunity for falling into error that can be anticipated. In this matter, more almost than in any other, the ounce of prevention is worth the pound of cure. A good general rule to follow is, "Prepare for written composition by an oral exercise." This gives the necessary opportunity to make sure that a worth-while subject will be chosen, that the facts will be carefully selected and arranged, and that they will be expressed in the most forceful and effective way. The child who recognizes thinking as the first step in composition, and trains himself to think clearly, passing from thought to thought in an orderly way and expressing each clearly, will rarely fall into the run-on sentence habit. He will think each sentence through before he begins to write it and before he begins to frame the following sentence.

**Criticizing written compositions.** Read once more all that has been said in former chapters about criticism, and also what has been said regarding standards and the teacher's responsibility for providing them. At the root of growth in language power lies the ability to appreciate what is good, and to know why it is good. From the outset it is a good plan after each written lesson to write on the blackboard one or two of the compositions produced and have them criticized by the class. As suggested in connection with oral composition, the pupils will scrutinize each composition to see if the ends aimed at have been attained, keeping in mind the additional matters

of form involved in written composition. In the third and fourth grades it is sufficient to note if the story is interesting from the start; if it is told in clear sentences; if facts are given in their right order; if the best words have been used; and if arrangement on paper, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are correct.

Have in some convenient place a list of the features that are to be considered in estimating the worth of a composition, and have them considered one at a time when criticizing.

As already suggested, compositions worthy to serve as tentative models should be preserved and kept where the children can readily refer to them from time to time. As the power to criticize increases, compositions may be compared with these models, and definite reasons why they are not so good, why they are as good, or why they are better, may be given.

Home-made measuring scales are very useful. For a brief consideration of these and of standard tests and measurements, see Chapter Eleven.

#### PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALIZATION

**The function of punctuation and capitalization.** From the outset, punctuation and capitalization should be regarded solely as a means of helping the reader. Just as the inflections of the voice make it easy to grasp the meaning of the spoken word, so in writing, capitals make certain that important words stand out prominently, and punctuation marks serve to group words in ways that make it easy to catch the thought. It has already been shown that the capital that begins a sentence and the mark that ends it serve to show clearly the limits of the sentence. As the eye sweeps along the line, it finds and interprets these familiar waymarks. Other marks have equally important functions. The important thing is to teach a new technicality *when the need for*

*it develops.* The pupil then appreciates its full significance because he is using it for a necessary purpose.

**Writing dates.** Every child was probably taught in the first grade — certainly in the second — to write his full address, and he recognizes the commas used as marks that set off the parts of the address from one another. The use of commas in writing dates may be taught when the children begin to save their written work, since it will be desirable to know the order in which the compositions were written so that improvement may easily be noted. The motive for writing dates having been established, there is little to learn. The name of the month must be spelled accurately, and the day of the month must be set off from the year in order to avoid confusion. Much practice at first is essential. Accuracy, and the habit of putting in the comma when the place where it belongs is reached, will result much more surely from writing the date several times in one exercise than from writing it once on several successive days. Clinch new knowledge of this sort, and transform knowledge into an expression habit, by abundant drill at the outset. When a pupil can write the date accurately and promptly, have him put it on all his written work.

**The method of contrast in teaching punctuation.** The method of contrast is well illustrated in connection with the apostrophe. The apostrophe will early be taught in contractions as a substitute for the letter or letters omitted. Later, when the children's needs make it desirable for them to use the apostrophe in possessives, the logical method is to begin with the use already learned. Take, for instance, a sentence containing a contraction and a possessive :

The Dutch boy's clothing isn't like ours.

The contraction will be explained, and then ask if the other word also contains a short form, or contraction. If the pupils

are given time to study the matter, some will invariably discover that the first word containing an apostrophe is not a contraction. Then begin a search for the reason for its use, and with skillful questioning the children will discover what it is. Show that the name of the object owned often immediately follows the word denoting ownership.

The common method of having for drill a list of sentences each of which contains a possessive, is not likely to produce thought. It seems better, whenever using the method of contrast, to give drill sentences using the apostrophe both in the familiar way and in the new manner. It then becomes necessary to think at each step, and it is this thinking that fixes in the mind the new fact to be learned. After that, much drill in using the possessive form will help to establish the habit.

#### LETTER WRITING

**An advanced step in letter writing.** The simplest note form alone has so far been considered. When this form is thoroughly fixed in the mind and the habit of using it is established, the full letter form may be taught.

One profitable and interesting way to introduce the subject is to have a conversation lesson on sending letters with the help of the post office. Let the children tell all that they know about the subject — how the letters are collected, what happens to them before they are sent away, and how they are distributed. Bring out then the fact that the person receiving a letter must know exactly how to address the answer. For this reason, whether or not that person already has the information, it is customary to put the address of the writer at the very beginning of the letter, and *in precisely the form which the person replying to the letter needs to use*. Bring out also the desirability of knowing *when* a letter was written.



There is nothing new in the heading, for the children will already have learned to write their addresses and dates. The chief difficulty lies in arranging the details of the heading in a correct and pleasing way. Here again good models to consult, and unfailing care in following them, are the solution. If the children practiced at first only when they actually wrote a letter, the right habit would be formed very slowly. It is a good plan, immediately after teaching the complete letter form, to let the children daily for a week write a letter that is a skeleton as far as the body is concerned. Of course, each child will write his own heading, that being the only one that concerns him. Here is a form that may be used as a model :

110 Wilson Street  
Brooklyn, New York  
December 8, 1925

Dear Mary,

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Your true friend,  
Jennie E. Smith

**Writing letters of several paragraphs.** All oral and written composition, thus far considered, has been limited to a single paragraph. This should remain the rule throughout the third and fourth grades for both oral and written stories, but letters should not be restricted in this way, except in the case of simple invitations or notes limited by the nature of their subject.

The child has been taught that only sentences that help each other tell a story should be included in a paragraph,

and he has learned to select subjects that can be interestingly handled in a single paragraph. But in real life people do not write letters about one narrow phase of a subject. Indeed, the average friendly letter is concerned with a variety of subjects, each of interest to the writer and presumably to the person addressed. It has well been said by critics that the one-paragraph letters children are sometimes trained to write in school are types of very undesirable letters.

The fact is that a paragraph in a letter is not precisely what it is in any other composition. In ordinary narrative there may be a number of paragraphs, and each is a true paragraph in that it deals with one phase of the larger subject. But there is the closest relation between the paragraphs themselves. This type of paragraph work the children will study later. The paragraphs of a letter may relate to entirely different subjects, each having its own section of the letter. A boy away from home may write to his mother in one paragraph about his journey, in another about an ocean bath, and in a third about the condition of his clothes. In spite of the mixture of topics, the letter may be a good one.

When the children are ready for this step in the fourth grade, explain to them that when people meet socially they talk about different experiences, and in the same way when they write to each other, they have various matters to write about. The important thing is that when the subject changes, there must be a new paragraph. Each of these paragraphs is more or less completely independent of the others. A letter like the following may be used as a model, or better, a real letter may be brought to school.

156 Post Street  
Yonkers, New York  
January 5, 1925

Dear Bessie,

Many thanks for your lovely Christmas present. What little bird told you that I wanted "In the Days of Giants" more than any other book?

Last night we had a terrible storm. It snowed all night and this morning the streets are covered with ice. I just saw two little children fall. Poor little things!

Give my dearest love to Uncle John and Aunt Fannie. When are you coming to visit us?

Lovingly,  
Jennie

The children will quickly grasp the significance of the three-paragraph form, and in order that they may write real letters rather than school parodies of letters, they should be allowed to employ several paragraphs, with the understanding that each will be carefully planned just as if it were to be the only one.

**Motivating letter writing.** Read once more what is said on page 38 about motivating notes. In some schools the children are encouraged to write actual letters to friends during the school letter-writing lesson, the letters being written under the supervision of the teacher. When this is done, the children may bring their stationery from home, if the school does not provide it. The practice of occasionally, at least, using unruled paper should not be too long delayed, although perhaps the fifth grade is early enough to begin it.

#### LEARNING TO KEEP A DIARY

Like adults, children are prone to take more pains when what they write is to take permanent form than if it is merely an exercise. When the oral language work is well advanced in the fourth grade, and the pupils are reporting

discoveries they make by using their eyes, diaries are helpful. They can be made by folding large sheets of paper, or small blank books may be employed. Here the pupil finds a new use for writing dates, and investigation of a real diary shows that the day of the week as well as the day of the month is noted. Show the children a diary, preferably one brought on request by a pupil. Develop the idea that diaries are kept to note for future reference the important happenings of the day. Then let the class once a week, or more often, make a record of some unusual experience or of some discovery in nature.

If the teacher thinks best, the diary story may first be written on paper and corrected before it is copied into the diary. In such cases the first draft should be handed in with the diary, but may be destroyed after the teacher has seen it. This is a precaution against careless work that would be harmful instead of being a help.

Here is a fourth-grade diary story :

TUESDAY, MAY 6, 1925

This morning on my way to school I found some violets. They were the first I have seen. I picked a large bunch of them. Miss Smith put them in water. Every little while she smells of them. I think she must like them as well as I do.

#### ANTICIPATING NEEDS AND DIFFICULTIES

**Preventing mistakes by looking ahead.** While only the punctuation required is thoroughly taught, it is a good plan sometimes to anticipate the use of punctuation marks. The comma in a series is a case in point. When writing letters at Christmas, nearly every child writes a list of things that would be welcome from Santa Claus. Knowing this to be the case, the teacher will find it a good plan to put on the blackboard a sentence containing such a list correctly punc-



tuated, and ask the children to read it aloud. They will note the way in which the voice is used in reading the sentence, and will then appreciate the fact that the comma does for the reader of the sentence what the voice does for the listener. If they use such a list in their letters, they can write it as the blackboard sentence is written. The same use of the comma is sure to develop in spring when reporting in the diaries what birds or flowers have been seen. At this time the need may again be anticipated. If the children are not given this help, it is wise not to refer to the omission of the comma when criticizing the compositions. As a rule, only those matters that have been thoroughly taught should be criticized.

Another case of anticipation is concerned with the use of quotation marks to indicate the titles of books. If children have been interested in reading, and some attention has been given to the books they read at home, it frequently happens that they name books either in their Christmas letters or in their letters of thanks after Christmas. For this reason it is a good plan to write a sentence containing a title on the blackboard, in order that the children who wish to use titles in their letters may copy the form.

**Teaching the use of quotation marks in direct quotations.** The use of quotation marks in writing direct quotations is generally taught unnecessarily early. Children rarely use direct discourse, and as they have no genuine need for the use of quotation marks in this way, the whole process appears to them artificial, and the marks are rarely used correctly. In the thousands of compositions referred to at the beginning of this chapter, there were few cases in which the marks were correctly used below the highest grades, and many mistakes were made there. In lower grades there was evident merely a superficial acquaintance with the marks.

Not until the use of direct quotations is introduced as a definite step in story-telling, a step designed to secure the

greater life and vivacity that always characterize the quotation of a person's exact words, is it necessary to teach the use of quotation marks. But long before that time they may be interpreted, and when this is done, say toward the end of the fourth year, the foundation for intelligent use is laid. At the same time the pupils learn the meaning of the marks that they have been seeing ever since they began to read. They understand their use in books long before they try to make use of them in their written work. As a consequence, they understand the marks more fully than when the class is required, as in so many schools, to use them in the course of practically the first lesson in which they are mentioned.

If the language textbook does not provide for this method of attack on quotation marks, it will be a good plan to take a lesson in the reader which contains conversation carried on in fairly short sentences. After a little questioning on the part of the teacher, some bright children will for themselves discover, partially at least, the function of the marks. But all children can be led to see that as a rule the sentences contain a part that gives the exact words that some one else used, and a part that simply explains. Then lead them to see that the part that gives the words of another person is indicated in three ways: it begins with a capital letter, even though it is not at the beginning of the sentence; it is set off from the explaining part of the sentence by one or two commas; and it is enclosed in quotation marks. After this have much practice in explaining quotation marks as used in books, training the children to look always for the *three* special signs that mark the quoted words. Children like to do this and it prepares them for using the marks correctly when the time comes. Observation is always a good starting point. It is, in fact, the scientific way: first, observation; second, interpretation; and lastly, application.

## THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF ORAL AND WRITTEN WORK

Because in life most people talk much more than they write, it is argued that relatively much less time should be given to written work than to oral. While this is true, it should be borne in mind that there is no necessary relation between the practical importance of an activity and the time required to master it. As a matter of fact, the difficulties involved in expressing thought in writing are so varied and perplexing, that without much practice in the early stages little progress is made. Many successful teachers have found that the custom of requiring each day one written exercise, short but definite, pays big dividends. Sometimes it may be a composition written in the English period; sometimes a description or an explanation or a suggestion connected with projects that are being worked out; sometimes a paragraph of two or three sentences answering a question concerned with some other subject. The important consideration is to make written expression a natural and agreeable means of communicating thought. This end may be achieved by daily written exercises that are motivated, short, and as interesting as possible, if the teacher infuses life into the work and accepts from the start only the best that it is in the individual's power to produce.

## REMINDERS AND SUGGESTIONS

Here are a few general suggestions :

1. Little has been said about the textbook in this chapter, because it is difficult to show how to use textbooks in general when presenting special methods. But the book should be used to the limit of its possibilities. Interpreting directions is in itself valuable self-help work, and, as pointed out in discussing the importance of the book, the pupil should be trained to independent study whenever possible. Supplement only when necessary to produce the results you are aiming to secure. Remember that the textbook is your co-teacher.

2. The value of copying a composition that is not satisfactory is a subject on which opinions differ. Very good results have been achieved by never asking a pupil to copy a composition except in the case of carelessness. If a pupil has not done his best, he should be taught the wisdom of making suitable first efforts by being required to do his work as well as he can before dropping it. If it is a question, however, of other matters, the desired improvement will probably be more quickly secured, and with less discouragement, if the pupil is asked to write a new composition.

3. Train children to think each sentence through before writing a word of it.

4. Try to arouse pride in honest work and in constant improvement. It is a good plan at intervals to ask the pupils themselves to report on their progress, as judged by the standards that have been set up by the class. See all that relates to written composition in the chapter on "Self-Help Activities" that has any application to the work discussed in this chapter. Read Chapter Eleven.

5. Do not be discouraged if improvement is slow. This is usually inevitable.

6. Never lose from sight the practical advantage of *avoiding* rather than *correcting*.

7. Keep in mind the rights of the very bright pupils. Allow them to drop any work that they do exceedingly well. Let the group of good workers take charge of the bulletin board, or let them criticize the work of their comrades while the teacher is engaged with the slower pupils.

8. Above all, remember that the power to write should be applied when it is demanded by some special situation. The formal composition lesson affords an opportunity for teaching a principle. The principle should be applied in meeting genuine needs. It is probably true that the richer the school life, the more self-active the pupils, and the more accustomed to free expression of ideas, the less formal composition work there will be. The written work required by the varied activities in which the pupils are engaged will offer abundant opportunities for expression, and writing will become a necessary, and therefore an appreciated, means of communication.

#### FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. What projects or other activities of your class will afford opportunities for writing genuine letters? Make a list of these opportuni-



ties so that you will not overlook any. Why is writing a genuine letter a more valuable experience for the pupil than writing simply for practice? Is practice ever a legitimate motive for writing letters? If it is, should the pupil be conscious that he is having a habit-forming experience? Why, or why not?

2. In what ways may writing original stories be motivated?

3. Compare your methods of correcting the written work of your pupils with those used by other teachers whom you know. Which method throws upon the pupil the most responsibility? What evils may result from marking all mistakes on a pupil's paper? What are the advantages of requiring a pupil to find and correct his own mistakes as far as possible? What are the advantages of forming small groups of pupils each of whom shall first carefully revise his own written work, and then go over the work of his comrades before the compositions are passed to the teacher? What disadvantages may such a system have with young children unless it is supervised to a certain extent by the teacher?

4. Discuss with other teachers the possibility of making a home-made measuring scale for use in your grade. Read Chapter Eleven. Are you using diagnostic tests and drill tests? They will often help you to discover and to overcome a poor English habit that otherwise might escape your attention.

### FOR READING AND STUDY

#### STANDARDS

MAHONEY. *Standards in English*. World Book Company.

SHERIDAN. *Speaking and Writing English*. Benjamin H. Sanborn & Co.

*Course of Study of Baltimore County*. Warwick & York, Inc.

#### METHODS

Consult all the books of method listed on pages 155 and 156, and also the following:

BROWN. *How the French Boy Learns to Write*. Harvard University Press.

GOLDWASSER. *Method and Methods in the Teaching of English*. D. C. Heath & Co. (Read the chapter dealing with letter writing.)

Consult the lists at the close of Chapters Ten and Eleven.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### COMPOSITION IN THE FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADES

#### INTRODUCTION

**Plan of this chapter.** In discussing the English work of the third and fourth grades, oral and written composition were considered in separate chapters. This distinction is not made, however, in dealing with composition in the higher grades. The basic principles of each mode of expression having been taught, oral and written composition advance hand in hand somewhat as they do in the classroom.

**Relation of this chapter to what has preceded and to later chapters.** This chapter is based on all that precedes it. It also presupposes the reading of later chapters. The teacher who is making a thorough study of the work of the fifth and sixth grades might well adopt the following plan :

1. Review Chapters Two, Six, and Seven, in order to have in mind the work of all preceding grades.

2. Review Chapter Three to recall the functions of the teacher in the self-help study process, the functions of the textbook, and methods of independent study.

3. Review Chapter Four in order that the self-help activities there described may constantly be applied. These activities are frequently mentioned in this chapter, but there is no repetition of methods for developing them. When, for instance, notebooks are referred to in this chapter, it is expected that the teacher will turn back to Chapter Four and study the methods suggested for preparing and keeping notebooks. In the same way, references to the dictionary, the textbook, reference books; to vocabulary building; to criticism, and so on, should at once stimulate to a review of these topics.

4. Review Chapter Five. As suggested in that chapter, correct-usage drills should occur daily. The language habits of the class are revealed whenever they speak or write. The needs being known, the methods of Chapter Five, or others as effective, should be used until the correct form has taken the place of the incorrect.

5. Study carefully Chapter Ten. Throughout the year utilize to the utmost all opportunities for informal language training.

6. Study Chapter Eleven in order to get suggestions for measuring regularly and as accurately as possible the composition power of your pupils. If you are ambitious and wish to use standardized composition scales, make a thorough study of the subject, and if possible get some expert to give you the necessary training in applying the scale. In any case, make provision for at least a home-made scale and for using the English practice tests for diagnostic and drill purposes.

#### DISCOVERING CLASS AND INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

**The function of the earliest lessons.** The teacher beginning work with a new class naturally seeks first to explore the minds of her pupils in order to discover what foundation exists for the work she hopes to do. In a general way she knows what habits and skills the pupils should have acquired, but a long vacation is an exceedingly distracting experience, and she will find that much that is essential has grown vague, if it has not actually been forgotten.

In the fifth grade the teacher may well enlist the pupils themselves in determining the strong and the weak points of the class as a whole and of its individual members. The ideals cultivated in the lower grades and the critical power there developed make it possible for the pupils to do this work under the direction of the teacher. Be sure that the pupils understand that they are to discover the weak spots of the English work in order that these spots may be strengthened before taking up new phases of composition. The first few weeks may well be devoted to the project.

**Setting up a temporary composition standard.** Oral composition makes a good starting point for investigation. As a means of refreshing the minds of the pupils on the characteristics of a good composition, to help new pupils who may not have had good training in lower grades, and to furnish a temporary standard by which the oral compositions may be judged, a

2. it means  
a spelling

class composition is valuable. A picture lesson is particularly appropriate because the discussion involved in reading and interpreting the picture reveals clearly the power of the class to apply in informal conversation what has been taught them in the more formal lessons.

When the picture has been discussed and agreement has been reached as to the point of view from which the story shall be told, a title may be chosen and written on the blackboard by the teacher, or, better still, by a competent pupil. The story will then be built up sentence by sentence, many suggestions being obtained at each step. The sentence approved in each case by a majority of the class will be used. The story should be no longer than those that individual pupils will be expected to tell. One paragraph is the ideal.

Setting up a limit to the number of sentences is a common practice that is at least questionable. The mind does not always work smoothly and freely when so restricted. As a rule, compositions of the desired length should be secured by the selection of subjects that can be treated in an interesting way in a narrow compass, and by training pupils to hold closely to their subjects. While the teacher may have in mind compositions of six or seven sentences, it may easily happen that some compositions will contain but four or five sentences, while others will contain eight or more.

When the story has been written on the blackboard, the children should read it as a whole, and if possible improve it in interest, in sentence structure, in vocabulary, and in the order in which the facts are related. This is often necessary in a story that has been worked out in piecemeal fashion. The completed story should then remain on the blackboard to serve as a temporary standard for judging the individual stories that are to be told.

**Finding the strong and the weak points in oral composition.** Several days may well be devoted to telling interesting vaca-



tion experiences, anecdotes from books read, or facts learned by observation. The children should think out their stories in advance, trying to give them the good features of the standard story. When a story has been told, the class should criticize it, purely as an act of social service, telling first what is good and then what may be improved. Review what has been said about criticism in earlier chapters. =

At the last, one feature to be at once improved by the story-teller should be selected. This will give each pupil a definite aim, and something by which to measure improvement. When each pupil has told two or three stories, not only should the individual needs have been discovered, but the predominant weakness of the class as a whole should have been revealed. With definite aims thus set up, teacher and pupils are ready to go to work intelligently for growth in oral composition skill.

**Finding the strong and the weak points in written composition.** It is always a good plan for a teacher to have on hand a set of compositions that represent satisfactory work at the beginning of the year. These compositions should be classified into three or four groups according to their merit, and be used as temporary standards. Without this precaution, the composition ability of her class at the close of the preceding year may influence the teacher's judgment of the abilities of her new pupils.

The qualities of the standard compositions should be discussed in detail, so that every pupil will appreciate their good features and recognize those that are not good. They will then realize why each composition is in the class in which it has been placed, and be able to judge their own compositions and those of their mates.

Devote several days to written composition, having the papers judged by the pupils themselves. Several pupils should rate each composition, and these pupils should ulti-

mately agree upon the class to which each composition shall be assigned. In addition, the weak points of each composition should be definitely pointed out so that the writer may recognize the strengthening of these points as his first responsibility in written composition.

A composition written early in the year should be copied into the notebook, and this composition will serve as a means of noting improvement. While constantly comparing his compositions with the standards, each pupil should be struggling to surpass his own previous accomplishment, keeping in mind the special aim that the class has helped him to set up. Start the year by treating careless work as the one unpardonable evil.

**Dictation as a means of discovering weak points.** Since a pupil may write a number of compositions without having occasion to apply some principle of capitalization and punctuation previously learned, dictation exercises may be used to review all technical matters taught in lower grades. The teacher should note the errors made, and in subsequent dictation lessons give sufficient drill to correct these.

**Precautions for securing correct letter forms.** In order that each pupil may have a letter, perfect in form, to which he may refer at any time, early in the year one letter should be copied into the notebook after the teacher and several pupil critics report that it is free from mistakes and that it has the main qualities of a good letter. The children should be reminded that no letter can be accepted that does not conform to established usage, and they should form the habit of consulting the notebook model whenever a letter is to be written. Like all other written work, letters should be so carefully prepared that little time will be required for criticizing technical matters. This will leave teacher and pupils free to concentrate the attention on improving the expression of the thought — that is, free to make constructive criticism.

Discovering individual and class errors of usage. The pupils should take the responsibility of noting for a definite period of time what common errors are made in the class. For the method, see Chapter Five. The most common errors should be selected for insistent attack day after day, the children often helping to make the sentences that will be repeated during the five-minute drills. Each child should also discover what his own worst habits are, and write in the proper section of his notebook sentences containing the right forms. If the pupils find it hard to remember to review these sentences *daily*, arrange groups of two or three pupils who will at some convenient time hear each other read the notebook sentences.

In all this work of discovering the needs of class and individuals in order that they may be attacked and conquered, the pupils should realize that the struggle is their own and not the teacher's, and that they must use self-help methods that enable them to assume the responsibility. And the discussion of these self-help methods — review, the dictionary, notebooks, using the eyes and ears, criticisms, building up serviceable vocabularies, and organizing teams — will provide valuable conversation lessons.

It may once more be urged that the pupils be not allowed to gain the impression that the improvement they are seeking to make is to be manifested solely in the composition class. It is a good plan frequently to measure improvement by the English used in other subjects. Although it is not possible to give close attention to the English in every recitation, even though outstanding faults are corrected, it is possible to do so every day in one recitation other than composition. If the subjects are changed day after day, no one subject will lose noticeably either in interest or in the amount of ground covered because of this good-English practice. In any case, the English must not be neglected.

Treat  
errors  
and  
then  
put them  
up for  
practice

*New composition ideals.* As soon as the year's work is well under way, each pupil keeping definitely in mind his own individual needs and striving by self-help methods to meet them both for his own sake and for the honor of the class, new ideals, discussed in the following section, may be set up, *one at a time*. This ideal becomes for the time being the special aim, although all previous ones will also remain constantly in mind.

#### ADVANCED STEPS IN COMPOSITION

*Sticking to the point.* Of course the pupils have been trying to stick to the point ever since they began to tell stories from limited subjects; but in the fifth grade a great advance can be made over previous effort, and the process can be made more deliberately a conscious one. Talk to the children about the sportsman who aims at a target and allows nothing to swerve his attention from it, and then train them to apply the same method to their composition effort.

The comparative method is most useful. The following composition, or a similar one produced in the class, may be written on the blackboard:

#### MY LAST VACATION

Aunt Alice did such a lovely thing last summer. She took me to New Hampshire for the entire vacation. Some very nice girls lived near her, and I enjoyed playing with them. We took walks, went wading in the brook, and played in the hay. One morning another girl and I had an exciting game of croquet. I came home when school opened.

Ask the children first of all to tell what is good about this composition. The fact that it is told in clear sentences that do not join too many thoughts will at once be noticed. Then ask what the point of the story is — that is, what one clear picture Jennie, the writer of the composition, wished to leave



in her classmates' minds. They will quickly discover that the story has no point, and that therefore Jennie could not stick to it. Upon being asked what experience referred to would make a good story, the exciting game of croquet will almost certainly be chosen by a majority. Then put on the black-board the following composition evolved by Jennie with the help of her classmates :

#### HOW I WON AN EXCITING GAME OF CROQUET

Last summer I won the most exciting game of croquet I ever played. Fannie Williams and I were well matched, and were both trying to make the last two wickets. My ball was in a perfect position. Bang! came Fannie's ball and sent mine flying. She then made both wickets but missed the stake. My heart was in my mouth when I tried to hit her ball from the other end of the court. But I did it! I then made both wickets and my ball just grazed the stake. I had won the game!

Have the compositions carefully compared until the pupils see clearly that in the second Jennie was trying to make her classmates see clearly the exciting game of croquet. She had a point, and she stuck to it.

Compare then the titles of the two stories, and draw out the fact that it would be impossible to tell a short, pointed story about the first. Note also that the second is limited to one phase of the summer's experience, and that it at once arouses interest by suggesting the point of the story.

**Avoiding unnecessary beginning and ending sentences.** Not only should the pupils be taught to aim at a target, but they should be trained to get to the point as quickly as possible. This involves the elimination of unnecessary beginning sentences. Take, for instance, the following composition of a sixth-grade boy :

Last summer I went to the seashore. It was very pleasant there. I went in bathing every day. One morning I was caught in a rip tide. The life guard saw that I was being carried out to sea and

plunged into the surf. After a hard struggle he reached me. I was unconscious when he pulled me ashore, but after a while I was as well as ever. That life guard is one of my heroes now.

The boy who told this story had a thrilling experience to relate, but he used several ineffectual sentences to introduce the episode. None of these sentences would arouse interest in the listeners. Show how much better the story would be if the near-tragedy were earlier hinted at. Let the pupils suggest what sentences should be dropped, and then frame good opening sentences. Something like the following might be secured after free discussion of the problem :

One morning last summer I came very near taking my last swim. I went out too far and was caught by — etc.

**Getting to the point in letter writing.** When children first begin to write letters in school, they are not likely to use the banal introductory sentences employed by so many older letter writers. Later, however, probably through imitation of letters that they receive or letters that they see, the practice makes its appearance. It should be throttled at once.

Show not only the uselessness, but the actual absurdity, of such opening sentences as the following :

I thought I would write you a letter.

I will now take my pen in hand.

As I have nothing else to do, etc. (Uncomplimentary as well as useless.)

At the same time, useless ending sentences may be banished. Show that sentences like the following add to the length of the letter, while they diminish its interest and force :

As I have nothing more to say, I will close.

Now I must close.

This is all for the present.

Until useless beginning and ending sentences have disappeared from the class compositions and letters, keep this

point in mind for special criticism by teacher and pupils. Emphasize the importance of *having a point, getting to it quickly, and sticking to it*, whenever telling stories, when explaining how things are done or made, and when discussing projects that are under way. Show also the practical value of these characteristics when applying for a situation, when trying to convince other people, or when getting a hearing from a business man whose time is money.

**Using direct quotations.** The simple fundamentals of composition having been taught, much may be done definitely to improve style. In relating personal experiences, in telling anecdotes to the class, in writing familiar letters, children often quote other people, but as a rule do so indirectly. The use of direct quotations generally needs to be taught, both to induce the habit of using them to enliven narrative and to have them written correctly. It was suggested that in the fourth grade the pupils be trained to understand direct quotations, and to explain fully and clearly the punctuation required in writing them. This having been done, using quotations as a forward step in story-telling may be begun in the fifth grade.

The method of contrast is useful here as in so many other situations. Put before the pupils two paragraphs, one told in direct and the other in indirect discourse, in order to show how much more lively and entertaining the direct-quotation narrative is. Take the following compositions, for instance:

#### MY FRIGHT AT A SCARECROW

One evening, just at dusk, I went to the shed for some wood. When I came back, what do you think I saw? In the garden stood a man with a dagger in his hand. I ran into the house, screaming that there was a man in the garden. Mother went out with me. When she saw the man, she laughed and said that it was the scarecrow Father had set up to frighten birds.

## MY FRIGHT AT A SCARECROW

One evening, just at dusk, I went to the shed for some wood. When I came back, what do you think I saw? In the garden stood a man with a dagger in his hand. I ran into the house, screaming, "Mother, Mother, there is a man in the garden!" Mother went out with me. When she saw the man, she laughed and said, "Why, my dear, that is the scarecrow your father set up to frighten the birds!"

Both stories tell what the child and the mother said, but only one uses the exact words of the speakers. The children will appreciate the added force and life that the direct quotations give the second composition. The study of quotations being motivated in this way, plenty of practice will serve first of all to form the habit of using direct quotations in the oral stories, and then to transfer this skill to written stories.

Much drill will be necessary to enable the pupils always to distinguish between direct and indirect quotations. The well-known habit of considering as direct quotations words that follow *He said*, and the like, must be avoided from the start. It helps children, when they are uncertain, to imagine themselves to be the speaker, and to express the quoted statement in the precise words of the speaker.

On the mechanical side, dictation helps. And since all children like fun, humorous anecdotes are valuable for this purpose. After a good laugh, the average child works with zeal. Anecdotes like the following may be used:

A lady and her little daughter were at luncheon. "These little fish are often eaten by larger fish," said the mother. "But how do the fish open the cans, Mother?" asked Mary.

Explain to the pupils that it is allowable to write a short anecdote in one paragraph, even though it contains quotations, but that it is better to put the words of each speaker in



Pupils make up sentences to punctuate.

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a separate paragraph if the conversation contains more than a single remark on each side.

This will be the time also to teach the use of the comma in setting off from the rest of the sentence the name of the person spoken to, *yes*, and *no* when it means the opposite of *yes*. It helps children to realize that it is only when writing direct quotations that this punctuation is necessary, but that it must never be omitted when it is needed. Train them to think in advance whether or not the composition or letter is to contain direct quotations, and to be on their guard accordingly. Above all, cultivate a feeling of responsibility by overlooking no mistake in writing quotations, since the pupil has permission to refer to his language book whenever he uses this troublesome, but effective, mode of expression. He should do this until he makes no mistakes, and with the thorough preliminary work suggested, mistakes are usually avoidable.

**Using exact language.** The failure to use exact language is manifested in all lines of school work. Take the matter of definition, for instance. A boy in a geography lesson referred to a separator. Another child asked what a separator was. The boy replied, "A separator is when you take the cream off the milk." What the boy needed to do was to substitute for the unfamiliar word *separator* a common word that all understood. Is a separator a person, a kind of spoon, a machine, or what? The boy who tried to define the word decided that it is a machine, and therefore used this word in his definition: "A separator is a machine that takes the cream off the milk."

Having in mind the many occasions in school and out of school when making one's point depends on the exact use of language, try to arouse enthusiasm and skill in making clear pictures with words. Explaining how something was made or done gives valuable practice. A boy has made a coaster,

for instance. Let him stand before the class and tell in explicit language how he made it. The test will lie in the comprehension of the explanation by his classmates. If the directions are so clear that the listeners could make a coaster of the same kind by following the instructions, the explanation is good. If any point is not clear, questions should be asked, and the directions repeated in a more intelligible form.

Explaining the solution of a problem in the arithmetic class also demands clear, exact language. In fact, the opportunities for training in this important particular are abundant, and should be utilized. Describing is invaluable as a means of securing the accurate use of words.

Here is a description that makes a clear word picture :

A boy is standing in a swing. He has twined his arms around the ropes to hold himself fast. In one hand he holds a small cup. In the other is a clay pipe with which he is blowing soap bubbles. The bubbles float lazily in the air. A little black dog, as light as a soap bubble, is trying to get into the swing.

On the opposite page is an artist's picture of the same scene. The cut and the word picture are identical. Require the pupils to describe in the same clear way any pictures that are available. It often adds interest to use the same picture first for description, when only what is actually seen is mentioned, and then for story-telling, an exercise that necessitates the use of the imagination. A story about the picture on page 193 would be concerned with the boy's reasons for blowing bubbles in so inconvenient a position. The imagination pictures the boy blowing the bubbles as he sits on the ground, the playful dog's successful efforts to burst the bubbles, the boy's desire to see them float off undisturbed into space, and his consequent leap into the swing.

It is good practice to select a picture and ask part of the class to describe it and the others to tell a story about it.



Each group will be eager to see if the members of the other group have encroached on their preserves. To learn to distinguish between what he actually sees, and his more or less accurate interpretation of what he sees, is an important lesson for the pupil. Many a child at home or at school, as well as many a man or woman in the witness box, unconsciously renders false testimony simply because he does not make the distinction.

**Learning to understand the use of paragraphs.** In order to illustrate once more how children would study a composition lesson from the textbook, the significance of the paragraph in composition other than letter writing is presented below as it is given in a textbook.

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#### PARAGRAPH STUDY

Do you remember that you began to study quotations by noticing how they were written in books? You did not use direct quotations in your own stories until you fully understood how they were written. You will follow the same plan in studying stories of several paragraphs.

In what form of composition have you sometimes used several paragraphs? Why was it not necessary for these paragraphs to tell about the same subject?

The paragraphs in other compositions than letters, however, must all relate to the same subject. Read the following story :

#### LADDIE'S LAST FIRE

For twenty years Laddie had helped draw a fire engine. Now he was old and doing duty in the park department.

One morning, harnessed to a light buggy, Laddie was hitched in front of an office building. His head hung drowsily. Perhaps he was dreaming of the happy days when his strength and speed were the boast of Fire Company No. 3.



Suddenly the fire chief's runabout dashed past, followed by an engine and a hook-and-ladder truck. The clanging of bells, the roar of motors, and the screams of excited children all helped make the noisy confusion that a fire creates in a crowded city.

Laddie was not drowsy now. His head was proudly erect. His ears twitched and his eyes flashed. His feet pawed the pavement, but for a moment only. With one swift jerk he was free and was dashing up the street. The buggy swayed from side to side, but did not overturn, and soon Laddie, foaming at the mouth, but triumphant, drew up beside the puffing engine.

The fire was already under control, and followed by Laddie, the engine started back for the fire house. On the way the old horse was spied by his new master, who administered a gentle scolding and then drove back to the park stable. But Laddie's ears continued to twitch, and his master knew that he was happier for having attended one more fire.

Read the story silently. What is the title of the story? Does the title suggest the point of the story? How many paragraphs are there? The first introduces you to Laddie. You may call it the *introduction*. What does the second paragraph tell about? the third? the fourth? the fifth?

Five pupils may tell the story, each giving one paragraph. Tell it in your own way, but use some of the words of the book that will help you make a clear picture. Stick to the point!

The class may criticize the story-telling. Did any one give any facts that belonged in another paragraph?

---

In the fifth and sixth grades, a majority of the pupils should be able to study this lesson with entire independence, and come to class prepared to do in a satisfactory manner what is required. When the lesson is assigned, a few moments may be taken for looking it through, and then all who have no questions to ask may be dismissed, or may begin to do the work, if the supervised study plan is being followed. The remaining pupils will be given an opportunity to raise any

questions they desire to ask, each question being answered by another pupil if possible. When all understand what is required, these pupils also will be dismissed.

When the class reassembles, several courses are possible, but the teacher should always select a plan that will throw responsibility on the pupils. The teacher might open the discussion by remarking that it is not the purpose of the lesson to secure at once compositions of several paragraphs from the pupils, and then ask for its real purpose. When some one has replied that the purpose of the lesson is to help the class to understand paragraphs in stories, another pupil may be asked to explain clearly the nature of paragraphs in letters. This having been done, the contrast between the unrelated paragraphs of many letters and the paragraphs of stories may be made, thus clearly setting before the pupils the full purpose of the lesson. From this point on the children need very little help.

Much valuable time is lost in many schools by requiring pupils to ask the questions when actual development is necessary. But in a lesson like the one under consideration, a pupil may take the lead to advantage, since the book lays down a course of procedure. The leader may select children to read the story, and then may ask the questions, or call on children to answer them after they have been read silently. It will frequently be necessary to ask questions not given in the book.

Telling what the paragraphs are about may lead to an interesting discussion. It is not always an easy thing to do, even if the paragraph is well constructed. In the early work with paragraphs, it is a good plan to have the children give statements instead of topics for the various paragraphs, as was recommended in connection with framing titles for stories. The topics can then be chosen from the sentences, or can be derived from them.

The following sentences and topics might be secured in this lesson :

Laddie is introduced.	Introduction
Laddie dreams of old times.	Laddie's dream
A fire alarm is sounded.	The fire alarm
Laddie goes to the fire.	Laddie's race to the fire
Laddie tells a secret with his ears.	The secret Laddie's ears told

When topics have been agreed upon, — not necessarily the best topics that could be framed, but the best the class can produce after coöperative effort, — they may be written on the blackboard by a pupil appointed by the leader, and the reproduction will follow.

It is during the reproduction that the teacher has her best opportunity to supplement the work of the leader. A suggestion now and then as to the selection of a word, or an intimation that a paragraph might be made more picturesque, will often help. At the last, before dismissing the class, the teacher may ask the children to notice the paragraphs in their readers and in all other books, and suggest that the method of study they followed with "Laddie's Last Fire" may be used in preparing geography, history, or literature lessons; in fact, it may be used in preparing any lesson whose text consists of several related paragraphs.

There should be a good deal of practice in paragraph study and in the framing of topics, but it need by no means be confined to the composition period. Make sure that the children appreciate the fact that paragraph study is a study in *thinking*. Show them how easily they can recall the main facts of several paragraphs if they think what each paragraph is about, try to remember the order of the topics, and associate with each topic the main facts of the paragraph concerned. Perhaps no work done in the elementary school contributes more richly to clear, orderly thinking than intel-

ligent paragraph work. There is, therefore, abundant opportunity for cultivating the paragraph sense without planning special lessons for that purpose. Geography, history, and literature offer particularly rich fields.

**Vocabulary growth.** Vocabulary growth is a valuable and natural outcome of all the composition work thus far outlined. To prepare and give orally or in writing a pointed paragraph; to enliven narrative by the use of direct discourse; to speak with exactness; and to analyze matter of several paragraphs, framing topics for each — all these demand a constantly growing vocabulary. Since the pupils are taught to use reference books, the natural growth of vocabulary that results from reading must be taken into account. If the child is taught to read well, he will get ideas from the printed page. These ideas he may afterward express in language contrasting in a marked way with that employed in the book. This is as it should be, because not until the pupil has made the thought his own is it of any value to him, and having made it his own, he will express it most effectively in words of his own choice. It nevertheless remains true that frequently he should recognize the fact that the author has used a word or a phrase that is so expressed that he feels like adding it permanently to his own stock of words. Words so selected, either by the individual or as the result of a class discussion, should be written in the notebooks, and thereafter reviewed with a view to using them whenever opportunity offers. This is the way in which many a man and woman have built up a vocabulary of strong, meaningful words. During the fifth and sixth grades, when children's memories are at their best, this matter of vocabulary should receive much attention *in connection with all subjects*. And while many words are being deliberately selected for use, many more will be almost unconsciously added to the working vocabulary, even though little is said about words. When the attention is specifically and

Carl M. V. Miller

Repeat note  
up a page  
from forth  
available  
for class  
direction  
and content  
Find now  
will need  
words  
from a sample  
in Appendix  
suggest from



constantly directed to the study of words with a view to determining which ones may prove valuable for personal use, the vocabulary will grow rapidly.

**Further suggestions on written composition.** The paragraph study should not be followed immediately by compositions of several paragraphs. The one-paragraph composition on a properly limited subject should remain throughout these grades the minimum aim. If a child can write such a paragraph with due regard to the selection and arrangement of the material used, express his thoughts in well-selected words, and prove himself master of the form requirements, he will have little trouble later in writing longer compositions when they become necessary. The ideal for children of the age under consideration is a composition that can be thought out, written, and carefully criticized by the writer during a study period. In other words, composition assignments should be such that a finished job may be expected. The one-paragraph composition not only meets these requirements, but also lays a solid foundation for several-paragraph compositions later.

In every case, individual ability and desire must be considered. While the aim remains as suggested above for the class as a whole, there will be some pupils who will wish to write longer compositions. They should not be held back, the only demand being that they prove fully able to do the work. This ability being demonstrated, there can be no good reason for restricting the pupil to the one-paragraph composition if he is eager to do more. Composition, almost more than any other school activity, lends itself to individual rates of progress.

Here is an exercise that children enjoy and from which they learn an important lesson. Let the class prepare for a written exercise by discussing orally a picture or a story to be reproduced. They should carefully prepare the outline, and then

assign the topics to different pupils. When the children read their contributions to the composite composition, they will quickly discover that the paragraphs do not hang together well. It then becomes their task to establish connections between the paragraphs. This is excellent practice.

#### ADVANCED WORK IN LETTER WRITING

**Social letters.** So far the pupils have been taught to write social letters exclusively, and this class of letters should throughout receive the emphasis.

The avoidance of useless beginning and ending sentences has already been considered. Another matter that should receive attention in the fifth and sixth grades is considering the interests of the person to whom the letter is written. An effective method of approach is to read to the class two letters that were written by the same person, but that differ because of the differing tastes of the persons to whom they were written. The letters of Phillips Brooks are useful for this purpose, a letter written from abroad to his little niece being contrasted with one written to an older member of the family. Or a letter taken from *Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to His Children* may be contrasted with one that Roosevelt wrote to a friend of about his own age. Children quickly get the point, and begin to realize that when they write a letter they must seek to interest the person to whom they are writing, just as in a social gathering people introduce topics of conversation that they know to be interesting to others in the group.

The exchange of letters with children in other schools of the community, or, better still, with children in distant places where conditions are different, affords the best possible means for training pupils to consider the interests of their correspondents. They themselves are naturally interested in hearing about matters with which they are unfamiliar, and

ask about these things. In return they are interested in giving the information which their correspondents desire. A correspondence of this sort, kept up during the school year, not only makes letter writing a genuine experience, but arouses interests and stimulates ambitions that otherwise would lie dormant.

Although the occasional writing of letters merely for practice is permissible, it will rarely be necessary if all opportunities for writing real letters are utilized. If school excursions are made to factories or to other places of interest, it will be necessary to write to the owners asking permission, and often to the street railroad company to secure special cars. There will be times when a patriotic address or an address on the practical value of using good English is desired, and a letter must be written to the person qualified to render the service. Later a letter of thanks will be needed.

Letters of the sort suggested should always be discussed in class, in order that each pupil may have the benefit of the ideas of his classmates and may obtain the hints and suggestions that the teacher throws out. Each pupil should then write a letter, and a committee of pupils working with the teacher should select the best one to be sent. In reporting, the committee should note in detail the reasons for their choice.

**Business letters.** The business letter should be taught when the need for writing one arises in the class. The pupils may wish to make a class subscription to a magazine; they may need to buy seeds for their garden work; they may wish to order a book for the school library, the principal having delegated to them the responsibility of doing the work required. Some of them may wish to apply for work during a long vacation, and so on.

Let us suppose that the principal of the school has given the class permission to order a book for the library. The follow-

ing letter form would be worked out in class, each detail being thoroughly discussed. The entire letter should be carefully compared with the form of a social letter. The letter would be signed by the pupil whose copy was chosen to be forwarded.

Roosevelt School  
Pasadena, California  
March 15, 1925

World Book Company  
Yonkers, New York

Gentlemen:

Please send me a copy of "The White Indian Boy." I am enclosing a money order for one dollar and twenty cents (\$1.20) in payment.

Very truly yours,  
William B. Sims

All textbooks give models of business letters, and it is therefore unnecessary to give others here. The important matters to emphasize are the necessity of having the form *exactly right*; getting directly to the point; using clear, courteous, and dignified language; and avoiding any appearance of carelessness.

Have the pupils write in their notebooks models of business letters, and then train them invariably to refresh their minds on matters of form before writing a business letter and to make sure that they have made no mistakes before handing in the letter or sending it off. An error that might have been avoided by using every help available should never be excused. Only by enforcing this rule can a teacher secure from some pupils the careful work that in time becomes habitual.

#### OBSERVING AND REPORTING RESULTS

At the beginning of this chapter the desirability of detecting the strong and the weak spots in the composition work of the class was pointed out. It is plain that new evidences of



strength and new weaknesses will appear from time to time. This involves the periodic setting up of fresh aims to meet the class and individual needs. In order to develop the habit of watching for improvement, the teacher should occasionally call for reports of progress. Each pupil should state in clear, simple language to what extent he has overcome his bad habits by substituting good ones. Use suitable measuring scales and teach the children to use them and to record the results by means of a graph. Read once more Chapter Eleven.

#### MAKING THE MOST OF THE GANG INSTINCT

Read carefully what is said in Chapter Four about organizing school teams when the gang spirit develops strongly, as it usually does at about sixth-grade age. A teacher who has never tried the plan will be astonished to find how large a burden of responsibility a team will assume under the stimulus of competition with other teams. Children like exactness in recording results, and marks for team success are striven for with almost unbelievable zeal.

It is difficult to overestimate the social significance of acts performed and efforts made for the glory of the team rather than for personal reward. Let the captains assume responsibility for securing the coöperation of the members of their teams. They will do it, often more quickly and effectively than the teacher could. When a pupil realizes that failure is to count against the team and rob it of earnestly desired marks, he will be very reluctant to encounter the team scorn and indignation that often develop in such cases. And if he knows that his compositions are to be scrutinized by a group of his mates before going to the teacher, and that they will invariably come back to him to be copied if they bear evidences of carelessness, he will usually be philosophical enough to do his best in the first place. And the pupil who habitually

does his best will experience the joy of helping the team as well as himself by his careful work. This is the reward of service cheerfully performed.

#### SENTENCE STUDY

**Introduction.** So far this chapter has been concerned with methods of improving the composition as a whole, but the use of short, clear sentences has been one of the main aims emphasized in criticism. Before the end of the fifth year, the average class will have reached a stage of development where a more advanced study of the sentence will give a fresh point of view and therefore prove helpful and stimulating.

It is not part of the plan of this book to discuss the pros and cons of teaching grammar in the grades. Scientific investigations have abundantly demonstrated the fact that technical grammar may be taught without in the slightest degree improving speech. It has never been demonstrated, however, that grammar, functionally taught, is the same fruitless exercise. On the other hand, many teachers who have taught only those principles of grammar that, immediately applied, make more intelligent the pupils' efforts to improve their sentence structure and the force and accuracy of their English, have demonstrated that grammar has several important functions that cannot be relegated to other agencies. It is this simple, functional grammar that is considered here.

**How sentences are built.** One method of attack is to lead the pupils to see, first of all, that it pays to understand the tools or machines or helps of any sort that one uses. The teacher might ask if it is possible for a person to run an automobile without understanding its most vital parts. Of course every pupil knows that a person can run an automobile under such circumstances, but the class will meet the teacher more than halfway in supporting the advantage of understanding the machine when something goes wrong, or when the driver

wishes intelligently to get all possible power from it. Other similar illustrations may be discussed, and then the class will be ready to be told that the same principle applies to sentences. They may be used, and constantly are used, without an understanding of their construction, but if a person wishes to use them to the very best advantage, a knowledge of how they are built is very useful. This will serve to motivate the grammatical study of the sentence.

The title suggests itself as a convenient point of departure. The pupils have already learned that a title is not necessarily a sentence. Often it simply names something. Take, for instance, titles like the following, and review what has been learned about them :

My First Party  
George Washington's Boyhood  
Our "Good-English" Drive

The children see that all these titles name something without directly telling anything. Ask them to make a sentence of each by stating something about the thing named. Sentences like the following will result :

My first party celebrated my fifth birthday.  
George Washington's boyhood was passed in the country.  
Our "Good-English" drive was a great success.

Have the children then give once more the part of each sentence that names something, and the part that tells something about the thing named. Then give the terms *subject* and *predicate* for the parts, and have a good deal of practice in giving the subjects and predicates of simple sentences. Use for this purpose sentences taken from the pupils' own compositions in their notebooks.

This preliminary work is quite likely to leave with the class the impression that the subject always comes first.

This difficulty should be anticipated. Take a sentence like the following :

Ned threw the ball over the fence.

Ask what different persons and things are mentioned in the sentence. *Ned*, *ball*, and *fence* are all named. Then ask what fact the predicate states. It states, of course, that some person or some thing *threw a ball*. Who threw the ball, Ned or the fence? The answer is obvious, and the subject is determined.

Now take another sentence and have the parts found in the same way, by hunting first for the predicate :

Up the street came the parade.

Have the children discover that this sentence states that some one or something *came up the street*. What came up the street? The answer locates the subject.

To gain skill in giving subject and predicate, and facility in using the new terms, have *much practice at the outset*. One good way is to appoint each day a pupil who before school on the following day will write on the bulletin board two sentences, one having the subject and the predicate in their natural order, and the other employing the inverted order. Take a minute at the beginning of each language period for having the subjects and the predicates given, and for changing the natural order to the inverted, and the reverse.

**The knowledge applied.** The needs of the pupils should determine the exact time when the structure of the sentence is taught. It is here recommended for the latter part of the fifth grade, because at about that time children who have made great progress in using sentences, and seem already to have a genuine sentence sense, begin to make certain mistakes in sentence structure that may sometimes be due to



their very care in the matter. Even though children have been in the habit of using short sentences, and possibly have developed a somewhat "choppy" style as a result, at about this time, because of increasing maturity and a more or less unconscious imitation of good sentences heard or read, or because the teacher has commended others for their sentence structure, they begin to employ more variety in their sentences. And then appears the run-on sentence like the following:

My brother is younger than I am he is much taller.

When this type of sentence makes its appearance, have the children tell how many thoughts it expresses. They will readily see that it gives two, and will read the words expressing each. Have them give the subject and the predicate of each part to prove that there are in reality two distinct statements. They know already that it is quite proper to express two thoughts in a single sentence, but develop the fact that if this is done the two parts of the sentence *must be joined*. Let various children suggest how the parts can be joined. These forms may be given:

My brother is younger than I am and he is much taller.

My brother is younger than I am but he is much taller.

A majority of the class will choose the second form, thus showing that they appreciate the contrast expressed by *but*, even though they can give no reason for their choice.

A large number of run-on sentences collected from the compositions of children revealed the fact that almost invariably the second thought began with a pronoun. They were sentences like the following:

We hauled him in he looked like a soaked puppy.

May did not go to school she broke her arm.

We started to walk home it was a long way.

The question arises whether in certain cases the parts ought to be joined at all. Let the children discuss sentences of the sort, preferably those taken from their own papers. The thoughts are in all cases closely related, but the children will themselves discover that often they should form separate sentences. They almost invariably unite the parts of the second illustration with the connective *because*, in this way revealing their appreciation of the relation between the clauses.

Another type of error that appears perhaps a little later is the clause sentence. In this case, also, it is frequently the careful children who go astray, probably because they recognize the presence of a subject and a predicate, and therefore consider the words a sentence.

Before the long game ended

Here are a subject and a predicate, and yet the words do not form a sentence. The pupils must be taught that while every sentence must have at least one subject and one predicate, one more thing is essential — it must completely express one or more thoughts. After the words quoted, one feels like asking, “What happened before the game ended?” The child completes the sentence by saying,

Before the long game ended I had to go home.

Or,

I had to go home before the end of the game.

He discovers that he has now completely expressed his thought.

It is well for the teacher to note that the correction of the latter type of sentence error resulted first in the production of a compound sentence, and then in the production of a simple sentence. Of course, this classification will not be taught to the pupil at this time, but if the teacher keeps it in mind, she

will have the best sort of basis for teaching these sentence forms later.

Perhaps it goes without the saying that not much should be said about a sentence sense. Usually the child does not comprehend the significance of the term, but persistent effort to cultivate the desired skill brings its sure reward. In the course of time the pupil gains a mastery of fairly simple sentence forms and knows almost instinctively when he has framed a good, forceful sentence. If the "choppy" style persists in any cases, compositions illustrating it may be written on the blackboard and the children trained to combine closely related thoughts in order to get greater force through greater variety in sentence length. They will also appreciate the added force obtained by the occasional inversion of subject and predicate. No child will fail to realize how much more vigorous is the second of the following descriptions of a race than the first. Let him find out to what the added force is due.

Away ran Lollo and away ran the dog.  
Lollo ran away and the dog ran away.

#### WORD STUDY

**The parts of speech.** In order to make more intelligent the struggle against common errors of speech, and at the same time to make more conscious and intelligent the effort for vocabulary growth, the parts of speech may be taught in the sixth grade.

One helpful device is to talk with the children about a house as a shelter for a family. Many workers are required to build it, and each worker has his individual task to perform. Carpenters, plumbers, masons, and other skilled workmen unite their efforts and produce a good house. A sentence is a shelter for a thought, and it requires two or

more classes of words to make it complete, each class of words having its own work to do. Then set about finding out what this work is.

It helps to establish at the outset the necessity for at least two kinds of workers in every sentence. Begin with a sentence like the following, and have the children give the subject and the predicate :

Many beautiful trees grow in the park.

See how many of the words in the subject can be dropped without destroying the subject. Proceed as follows : Drop *many*. Is what remains a sentence? Prove your answer. Drop *beautiful*, and test in the same way. If *trees* were dropped, would the sentence have a subject? Then *trees* must remain. Now think of the predicate words. If *grow* were dropped, would anything be stated about *trees*? Then *grow* also must remain. Drop *in the park*. Does a sentence remain? What is the subject of the sentence? the predicate? It is evident that at least two words are necessary, one in the subject and one in the predicate.

Whenever we think, we must think about something, and if we are to talk or write about that something, we must give it a name. This name is a noun. The word that cannot be spared in the predicate because it is the word that states something about the noun, is a verb. In the sentence considered, *trees* is a noun and *grow* is a verb.

It is a good plan to develop the parts of speech one at a time, emphasizing in the case of each how the knowledge gained may immediately be applied to securing better oral or written work. In the case of nouns, written problems alone are concerned. These problems make it desirable to teach proper and common nouns, for securing correct capitalization ; the singular and plural forms principally for the spelling difficulties of irregular plurals ; and the possessive forms.



Much drill is necessary to insure the use of the correct forms when they are needed.

It is not the purpose here to discuss in detail methods of developing all parts of speech, but rather to suggest a method of attack that will be helpful in all grammar teaching. Because grammar, however, is a subject that pupils may well study independently if the textbook clearly develops the topics, one textbook lesson is introduced here to show how it might be handled. After that, the aims for teaching each part of speech will be listed for convenient reference.

Here is a book lesson on the pronoun.

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#### WORDS THAT ACT AS SUBSTITUTES FOR NOUNS : PRONOUNS

When for any reason your teacher is absent from school, another teacher takes her place. Have you ever heard this teacher called a *substitute*? A substitute is a person who takes the place of another person.

Today you will learn about words that act as substitutes for other words. Read the following paragraph and you will easily discover why it is a good plan sometimes to use substitutes for certain words :

Bob ran pell-mell down the street. Bob dropped Bob's books and the wind took off Bob's hat. Bob met Ned, and Bob and Ned chased the hat. Bob and Ned sprinted for a block, and finally Bob and Ned caught the whirling headgear.

What is the trouble with the paragraph? Read it in an improved form. What words did you use to avoid repeating *Bob*, *Ned*, and *Bob and Ned*? Words that are substitutes for nouns are called *pronouns*, because it is their special business to take the place of nouns. *Pronoun* means *for a noun*.

Pronouns are troublesome words because they have so many different forms. Fill the blanks in the following paragraph with pronouns you may use instead of your

name in speaking of yourself, or of yourself and some other person. The first pronoun will be *I*. Make a list of the pronouns you use in the paragraph.

Every evening — go to the train to meet — father. Father often brings — something from the city. — walk home together. Mother sometimes comes to meet —.

How many different pronouns are on your list? Follow the same plan with the following paragraphs:

Prince was a fox terrier. — looked gentle, but there was mischief in — eye. Other dogs sometimes attacked —, but — soon surrendered. — ears were sure to be bitten, and nothing could induce — to renew the combat.

One day Nellie's mother said to —, "Will — please bring home — books tonight?" Nellie answered that — would surely bring —. Then — kissed each other, and Nellie started for school.

The rose was beautiful. — spread — perfume through the house.

How many different pronouns have you on your entire list? There are a few others, but you will study them later.

---

The significant feature of this lesson is that the subject is developed in such a way as to throw upon the pupils a maximum of responsibility. And yet it is so simply developed, that a majority of the pupils in any well-taught class can independently do what is required, and do it with full comprehension. The exceptions must have individual attention, but often this help can be given by members of the class.

Note that the lesson quoted has an introduction of two paragraphs that serves to explain the meaning of a new word used and to motivate the lesson. This is followed by an exercise that requires the pupil to face the problem and to think out the solution, several questions directing his thoughts.

Then follows the name of the new class of words discovered, and an exercise that throws upon the pupil the responsibility of listing the common pronouns. At the last he gives all the words he has found that act as substitutes for nouns to prevent unnecessary repetition. Drill to fix the pronouns and their function in mind should follow, this drill being immediately succeeded by a study of common errors in the use of pronouns. From the first grade, the pupils have had drill on the correct forms, but now the forms are studied as a group. It becomes the duty of the pupils to discover all the pronoun errors heard in their own class and to attack these.

One of the simplest ways in which to help children at this stage to overcome personal pronoun errors is to show them that when one pronoun alone is used in a certain relation, errors are seldom made. If it is right to say, "Mother sent *me* to the store," and "Mother sent *May* to the store," it is right to say, "Mother sent *May* and *me* to the store." If it is right to say, "I went to the store," and "May went to the store," it is right to say, "May and I went to the store." While the correct use of the pronouns is secured by repeating sentences containing them, at this stage children should begin to help themselves when they are in doubt. The correct use of *she* and *her*, *he* and *him*, *they* and *them*, may be discovered as in the case of *I* and *me*.

#### GRAMMAR FACTS THAT ARE A MEANS OF SELF-HELP

At this stage teach only those facts about each part of speech that will help solve some problem, either oral or written. But the principles that are taught should be developed inductively, either by the textbook or by the teacher, the children discovering the facts for themselves.

Here is an outline of grammar facts and their functions that may well be taught in the sixth grade:

↓  
1. *Nouns.* Teach nouns as the names of the things we talk or write about; proper and common nouns in order to secure correct capitalization; singular and plural forms in order to clinch the spelling of irregular plurals; and the possessive forms of singular and plural nouns for the correct use of the apostrophe in possessives.

2. *Pronouns.* (Only personal pronouns are studied at this stage.) Teach pronouns as substitutes that prevent the too frequent repetition of nouns. Have children themselves discover the different forms and list them. Review the common errors of speech to show how many relate to pronouns, and then point out a convenient method of self-help when in doubt. Teach the correct use of *them* and *those* by showing that *them* is a pronoun and therefore takes the place of a noun; *those* is not a pronoun and must always be used with a noun. Teach the significance and the proper use of *you're*, *they're*, *its*, and *it's*.

3. *Verbs.* Teach the verb as the necessary word in the predicate, the word without which no statement can be made. Review the common errors of speech, and show how very large a proportion are verb errors, and how significant this is since every sentence must have a verb. Have the children make lists of the common verb errors, cross out all that are no longer heard in the class concerned, and make sentences containing the correct forms of the others, using the sentences in the daily drills.

Show that the verb is the life-giving word of a sentence, and that the selection of expressive verbs greatly improves the sentence. Show that an expressive verb is one that tells a great deal, often showing not only what the person does, but how he feels. For instance, the use of the verb *dashed* instead of *ran* when speaking of a man who was very much excited; the use of *gasped* instead of *said* to describe how the man spoke. Give much practice in selecting expressive verbs, and have the children copy into the notebooks those that they think will be useful to them.

4. *Adjectives.* Teach adjectives as picture-making or pointing-out words. Have much practice in selecting the adjectives from selections studied, and showing how their use helps make a vivid picture.

Emphasize the selection of suitable adjectives, and the avoidance of overworked adjectives like *awful*, *nice*, and *great*. Teach also the exact use of adjectives in describing, not only in the composition class, but in the geography, history, and other classes. Give practice in selecting suitable adjectives to describe climate, a good citizen,



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weather, and the like. Have many of the most useful adjectives put into the notebooks for study and future use.

Teach the proper adjective, in order to have it capitalized when written. Emphasize the adjective as the servant of nouns and pronouns.

5. *Adverbs.* Teach the adverb as a word that serves verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs, just as the adjective serves nouns or pronouns. Distinguish between the adjective and the adverb, and show how the pupil may help himself in deciding whether in a given case the adjective *quick*, for instance, or the adverb *quickly* should be used. Guard against overworked adverbs like *awfully*, and give careful attention to selecting suitable ones when they are needed. Teach the difference between the adjective *good* and the adverb *well*.

6. *Prepositions.* Teach the preposition as a word that introduces a phrase which does the work of a single word, most frequently of an adverb. Give special attention to the correct use of *at* and *to*, *in* and *into*, *between* and *among*, and distinguish between the preposition *through* and the verb *threw*.

7. *Conjunctions.* For the present teach the conjunction merely as a word that joins two words that are used in the same way in a sentence or as a word that joins the parts of sentences. The principal point to emphasize at this stage is the avoidance of long sentences which include too many thoughts for clearness.

8. *Interjections.* The interjection is of little importance, but it should be taught simply to round out the list of parts of speech. Guard against slang interjections, such as "Gee!" Review the use of the exclamation point with interjections.

When all the parts of speech have been taught in the simple way indicated, and the study of each has been closely linked with either correct usage or vocabulary growth, the pupils will have acquired a new means of self-help that should be applied whenever it is needed. Have them understand that these eight so-called "parts of speech" do all the world's work of expressing thoughts by means of words.

### FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Review the discussion of dramatization in Chapter Six. What opportunities for dramatization does your grade afford in connec-

tion with literature? geography? history? What constructive activities can your pupils be trained to plan in preparation for dramatizing an incident from local history? What is the language value of this preparatory work?

2. Read the fifth- and sixth-grade objectives in Chapter Twelve. To what extent do you agree that their attainment is desirable and possible? Having your own pupils in mind, what changes, if any, would you make?

3. Is it a good plan to have practically all school experience followed by expression? An anecdote may help you to decide.

An enthusiastic geography teacher in the vicinity of New York planned a series of afternoon excursions to interesting places in the neighborhood. Although attendance was purely voluntary, every pupil who could possibly do so began by taking the jaunts. But on the third trip, a boy who had been very enthusiastic failed to appear. On the following day the teacher said to him, "I missed you yesterday, Ned. I hope you have not lost interest in our trips."

Ned thought for a moment, and then decided to be frank. "I'll tell you why I didn't come, Miss Breed," he said. "I enjoy the trips and I get a lot out of them, but when you tell us the next day to write about what we saw, it just spoils the fun."

The teacher answered in such a way that Ned never again missed a trip. What do you think she said? What would you say under similar circumstances?

4. What added English power may a pupil gain from a rich experience even though he is not required either to talk or to write about it?

#### FOR READING AND STUDY

Consult the lists on pages 155, 156, and 179, and select from such of the books as are available the help that you desire. The following books will also be helpful:

HALL-QUEST. *Supervised Study in Elementary Schools*. The Macmillan Company.

RAPEER. *How to Teach the Elementary Subjects*. Charles Scribner's Sons. (Read Chapters IV and V.)

Add also to your list of periodicals *The English Journal*. It is published by the University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois.

While *The English Journal* is principally concerned with the English of the high school, it often reports studies and makes suggestions that will prove invaluable to all higher-grade teachers.

## CHAPTER NINE

### COMPOSITION IN THE HIGHER GRADES

#### INTRODUCTION

THE methods suggested in this chapter may be used in the seventh and eighth grades under the older form of organization, or they may be used in all grades of the junior high school. They presuppose the attainment of the objectives for the sixth grade listed on page 283. A teacher who wishes to make a thorough study of the chapter should follow, with such modifications as are necessary, the suggestions given on page 180.

#### PROJECT — MAKING AN INVENTORY OF ENGLISH STOCK

**Classes of English projects.** The term *project* as here used indicates any activity that is carried on coöperatively by a class, largely through its own initiative, for some worthy purpose. Language activities are involved in two classes of projects. The first finds its incentive and its material in other subjects than English, but for expression is dependent upon oral and written language. The other lies wholly within the language field. It is this second type of project that is here considered.

**The initial project — preparing for the inventory.** Intelligent self-measurement is necessary to growth by self-help means. When a pupil reaches the seventh grade, he will have had enough practice in criticism to enable him to estimate with considerable accuracy the strong and the weak points in the work of individuals and of the class as a whole. This critical power may be utilized in the project of making an inventory.

One method of approach is to discuss with the class the business man's custom at the beginning of the year of making

an inventory of the stock he has on hand. This inventory enables him both to clear his shelves of merchandise for which there is no demand, and to add to the classes of goods required in the community. In the same way it is business-like in a school to discover what useful habits and skills are to be further cultivated, and also what English habits that society frowns upon must be eliminated.

The preparation of class and individual inventories of English stock makes a good project for the first weeks of school, the weeks which in any case would be devoted to strengthening foundations before taking up advanced work. During this period no new principles will be taught, but every effort will be made to infuse interest and enthusiasm into the review work. Fortunately language review does not necessitate the duplication of old material. The principles must be repeated, but the story-telling, the games, and indeed all the language activities may utilize fresh material. The stock-taking may well concern oral and written composition, all technicalities connected with written composition, and correct usage.

#### ORAL COMPOSITION

**Establishing ideals.** In order to review the characteristics of a good oral composition, the following paragraph, or a similar one, may be written on the blackboard:

A good oral composition results from clear thinking about a subject worth talking about. It arouses interest by its first sentence, it has a point and sticks to it, it tells facts in their right order, it uses exact and forceful language, and it stops when the story is told.

Such a statement refreshes the pupil's mind and at the same time helps him to judge the compositions told in class.

In the course of the month there should be enough oral composition lessons to enable each pupil to speak at least



twice. Vacation experiences, anecdotes from books read, discoveries made through observation, the results of original experiments, and community interests, all offer themselves for this work.

When a pupil has finished a composition, his classmates will criticize it, keeping in mind the blackboard outline. They will suggest to him one or two definite particulars in which his next composition should show improvement. Just before beginning his second composition, each pupil will remind the class in what respect he was cautioned to improve. The critics will give special attention to this matter when criticizing the composition.

The most common faults discovered during the oral composition lessons will be the ones that the class as a whole will try to overcome. Each pupil will also be held responsible for strengthening any weak points in his own work that were not included in the class list.

#### WRITTEN COMPOSITION

**Setting up temporary standards.** The following paragraph, or a similar one, may be written on the blackboard:

A good written composition has all the features of a good oral composition. In addition it is well placed as to margins and indentation, it is written neatly and plainly, capitals and punctuation marks are correctly used, and all words are spelled correctly.

With these ideals in mind, the pupils should help prepare a temporary standard of measurement. The seventh-grade teacher should have on hand a considerable number of compositions written during the second half of the preceding school year by sixth-grade pupils, and also a stock of compositions written during the preceding year by seventh-grade pupils.

These compositions should be carefully read by the pupils and classified into groups, four or five groups being better than a larger number.

One good method of work is to divide the class into committees of six or eight pupils. The compositions will be numbered, and each committee will arrange them according to their merits into classes. They will then keep a record by numbers of the compositions in each class. The remaining committees will perform the same service, and when all have finished the ratings will be compared. At this point it will probably be necessary for the teacher to give some help in settling disagreements. By judicious questioning, and by calling attention to features of the compositions that may have been overlooked, she will be able to secure such adjustments as are necessary. One typical composition from each class will then be selected, and these compositions, labeled serially by letter or number, beginning with the best, will afford a very satisfactory home-made measuring instrument for the beginning of the year. Should any pupils for convenience desire a measuring scale of their own, additional sets can easily be prepared from the classified compositions. Later scales such as those described in Chapter Eleven may be used for measuring composition ability with more exactness. Train the pupils to use a graph as suggested in that chapter.

**Copying and dictation.** For the sake of paving the way for written composition, a few copying and dictation lessons may be given, the lessons being carefully prepared to cover all technical matters previously taught. Before having a paragraph copied, ask the pupils to recall all necessary steps and to tell exactly how the matter should be studied. Have the reasons given for all capitals and punctuation marks. Similar paragraphs may then be dictated, the work being carefully corrected first by the writer, and then by another pupil. This work will serve to remind the pupils of the many possible pitfalls in expressing thoughts in writing, to review technical facts, and to show what review is most needed.

Read once more what was said on page 190 about humor in dictation matter. Under the most favorable circumstances many children consider writing from dictation a bore, and it would certainly be so considered by most adults. An occasional hearty laugh is an almost necessary school experience. Nothing else so quickly smooths out rough places.

**Writing compositions.** The preliminary work having been done, each pupil may write a composition of a single paragraph of moderate length. Only first drafts should be considered while the inventory project is under way. Each composition should be read by a number of children, be compared with the standard compositions, and be assigned to one of the classes into which these compositions were grouped. The reasons for putting it in one class or another should be clearly stated, and these reasons will tell the pupil who wrote the composition in what way he must strive to improve when writing his next composition. Incidentally, he should try to get into a higher group than the one to which his first composition was assigned. In all the written composition work, have it understood that it is not only permissible for the pupils to get all possible assistance from the textbook, dictionary, or other books, but that they are expected to use all available means of self-help.

When several compositions have been written by each pupil, it will be possible for the class in coöperation with the teacher to list the strong and the weak elements in the work of individuals and in the work of the class as a whole. These are the items that will be needed for the inventory that is to be made.

#### CORRECT USAGE

A practical way in which to discover the errors of usage made in the class is the method advocated in an earlier chapter (page 185). Teacher and pupils unite in an effort to

list all errors of speech heard either in school or outside of school during a fixed period of time. One simple plan is to have on the teacher's desk a box into which slips of paper containing the incorrect forms may be dropped. The initials of the person who made the error should be written on each slip. As the time for making the inventory approaches, a committee should be selected by the class to open the box and list all errors, with the number of times each was reported. These should then be arranged in the order of frequency of occurrence. Each pupil should also be given a list of the errors he made.

#### MAKING THE INVENTORY

The class will now have the facts needed for drafting the inventory. In other words, the stock-taking part of the project is completed. The pupils themselves will be able to decide how they may best arrange the items. The discussion for this purpose will afford good language practice, and it would be a poor seventh grade indeed that did not light upon a suitable form.

Here is a simple form of an individual inventory:

INVENTORY	
GOOD STOCK	POOR STOCK
Sticking to the point	No sentence variety
Accurate spelling	Some run-on sentences
No slang	<i>Don't</i> for <i>doesn't</i>
Careful work	Poor penmanship
	Apostrophe often omitted in possessives
	Papers sometimes unsigned

As soon as the notebooks are started, each child should copy his inventory into the book and then strive faithfully to strengthen the weak spots. As soon as a fault is corrected, it may be crossed out neatly. Items will be added to both



sides of the inventory as becomes necessary. The aim naturally will be to have a growing "good-stock" list and a diminishing list of "poor-stock" items.

The mistakes found to be common to a considerable number of pupils will form the basis of the class aims. These may be carefully formulated by the class and written on the bulletin board. The list should be short, new aims being added as others are attained and taken from the list. These items might be selected at the outset:

#### CLASS AIMS

We will try to improve our sentence structure.

We will try to get rid of all carelessness in written work.

We will banish *ain't*, *could of* *gone*, and *hadn't ought*.

The class as a whole and its individual members will now know precisely what they are to try to improve. It is of the utmost importance that they be encouraged to keep up the struggle until victory is achieved.

At intervals of six weeks to two months, or perhaps oftener, the work of each pupil should be judged by himself and his classmates, and the inventory be modified accordingly.

#### SETTING THE SELF-HELP MACHINERY IN OPERATION

Two important self-help activities were discussed in the preceding section — constructive criticism and the formulation of inventories and class aims. To these should at once be added the use of the dictionary, the notebook, and the more independent use of all kinds of self-help afforded by the textbook. A review at this point will be helpful.

**Using the dictionary.** Separate the class into groups and assign to each group one of the following topics:

How to find a word in the dictionary

How to learn the pronunciation of a word

How to find the meaning of a word

At the appointed time, each group will be ready to report. Each pupil should be ready to stand before the class, dictionary in hand, and explain clearly and fully his topic. The critics will be on the alert to note omissions of important steps and to ask questions if everything is not altogether clear.

**Using notebooks.** The same plan may be followed with notebooks. The pupils will bring to class some of the notebooks of the preceding year and explain how they were used. This may well be followed by a discussion of the degree of helpfulness afforded by the various sections of the notebooks. It may be that the pupils will desire to drop some and add others. Let them have free rein as long as they preserve the characteristics of a personal language book.

It is difficult to imagine any valid arguments against these sections: spelling, correct pronunciation, vocabulary growth, correct usage, compositions and letters, inventory. However, should the class as a whole feel that they would get more benefit from the notebooks if they had a smaller number of sections, giving more time to a few, the class plan should be tried out.

**Mastering the textbook.** The mastery of the textbook as a means of self-help should be achieved in these grades, and all possible uses should be noted. Have the pupils study carefully the Contents, the Index, the means afforded for reviewing the principles learned in lower grades, and the ways in which the book helps in preparing a lesson independently. When the subject has been well thrashed out, assign topics like the following to groups:

- What parts the language book contains
- The use of the Contents
- The use of the Index
- The difference between the Contents and the Index
- How to find review material
- How to study a lesson that teaches a new principle

With textbook in hand, each pupil will give his demonstration. The class will criticize and ask questions if necessary.

When these discussions are over, the class will have reviewed intelligently matters of importance, and will have had valuable practice in speaking to the point and in using exact language.

#### PROJECTS THAT CULTIVATE INITIATIVE

**The importance of initiative.** If one were to characterize in a single phrase the most striking advance in power that may reasonably be expected in the highest grades, that phrase would probably be *increased initiative*. Taking the initiative is not only a valuable self-help habit, but it lies at the foundation of influential living. Coupled with high ideals, it becomes the hall-mark of the independent, self-reliant, community-serving citizen.

All that has preceded has been concerned with the cultivation of initiative, but this section deals with some further ways in which it may be developed. Important projects are often concerned.

**Organizing the class.** Class organization is desirable for precisely the reasons that make organized effort out of school effective. It provides a democratic way of handling economically and coöperatively those matters of common interest that should largely be directed by the persons who are immediately concerned. It cultivates initiative and fixes responsibility where it belongs. The teacher does not need the added responsibility; the pupil does.

The class organization should not be distinctly an English enterprise, for it will often be helpful in connection with a variety of school activities. In connection with English, it will function as a Good-English Club.

It is rarely necessary to expend much effort in persuading children that a club is desirable. They are ordinarily more

than ready to organize, for the gang spirit is still a prominent characteristic.

A common method of organizing classes is to have the teacher or the textbook tell the pupils what to do and how to do it. This method results in the mere imitation of adult methods and is in no sense a self-help activity.

When the children have become interested in the enterprise by getting a glimpse of the advantages of working together and having good times of their own planning, let them investigate clubs in the community, even though nothing more than a corn club or a church sewing society is available for the purpose. The important thing is for them to find out why people band themselves together, how a simple organization with the necessary officers serves to make more effective the power of each active member, and how through committees many useful ends are accomplished — ends that would be unattainable through purely individual effort. Of course it will be an advantage to be able to investigate clubs whose meetings are conducted in a parliamentary way, but this is secondary. The procedure needed for the class organization will readily be learned from observation when this is possible, from asking questions outside of school, by reading, and, if necessary, by consulting the teacher.

At a fixed time have the children report what club they investigated, what its purpose is, its necessary officers, and their special duties. They may then discuss the work that their organization might do — discuss current events, plan programs, have simple debates, plan and direct Good-English drives, plan for correspondence with some other school, plan simple projects in various subjects, and the like. This being done, they will be ready to organize. They should plan for only the offices they actually need for the work they are going to do. Some of the most effective school clubs have been those with little machinery.



A very simple statement of the purposes of the club, the time of meeting, the officers and their work, and the regulations for calling the meetings will suffice for a constitution. *The organization should be no more complex than the children themselves make it.* The teacher should be ever ready with advice when needed, but she should not impose upon the pupils any procedure that is not necessary to the carrying out of their purposes as planned by themselves. Above all, the organization should be a genuine one. Genuine clubs do not put timid, retiring members into important executive positions in order to give them experience. The teacher who thinks that every pupil should sooner or later have an opportunity to play an important rôle, and insists on frequent rotation in office to make this possible, is making a farce of the project.

From the outset the pupils should be encouraged to select their officers wholly on the basis of their fitness for the position under consideration. Let them nominate the girls and boys who have manifested qualities of leadership and who will see the venture through. There are schools in which the pupils discuss the qualifications of candidates for office as frankly as is done at political conventions, but with vastly more regard for facts and human feelings. When the balloting is over, the children take great pride in the success of the boys and girls whom they have elevated to leadership.

After the officers are elected, each should give a two- or three-minute talk to the class, fully explaining what he conceives his duties to be. Then committees should be appointed. One very successful school club had the following: current events, entertainments, programs, correct usage, correct pronunciation, and vocabulary. At the close of every meeting the members of the last three took a few moments to call attention to any errors of English heard, any incorrect pronunciations, and to effective words used by any speaker,

as well as words for which better ones might be substituted. The members of these committees were on the watch throughout the meeting, and had their reports ready so that they could be given in very short order. The duties of the other committees are self-evident.

A club organized as suggested — and the plan has worked with marked effect even with a sixth grade — gives abundant opportunity for all to share real responsibility even though all may not occupy important offices. It is a good plan to change the leading officers occasionally if the pupils themselves advocate the change. But it should always be in order to renominate an officer who has made a real success of his work and to throw upon those nominating another candidate the burden of proof that their candidate can do better.

*W. L. G.*  
**An objection to class organization sometimes urged.** It is by no means uncommon to hear teachers say that they cannot encourage class organization because it takes so much time. This argument would be a good one if the process of organizing contributed nothing to the English power and to the general efficiency of the class. But in these days few will assert that there is any better language training possible than that afforded by the discussions, reports, explanations, and argument that are necessary. The school time devoted to the organization side of the project, therefore, bears rich fruit, and the investigation that precedes is in any case carried on out of school. And after the club is organized and in operation, there is real economy of time — an economy due both to added efficiency resulting from group effort and to the greater interest that always results from effort that is genuinely motivated. It is the exceptional child who does not do his best under club conditions.

**The class paper.** If the class is organized in the seventh year, the paper might become a major project for the eighth

and ninth years. The children should decide for themselves whether or not they wish to start a class paper after the teacher has told them how interesting other classes find the project. They should bring newspapers to school and study them with a view to finding out what departments they have and the function of each. If possible, they should visit a newspaper plant and get information and enthusiasm at first hand. Some classes invite a newspaper man to visit the school and talk to them about the advantages of newspaper work.

**Dangers that beset school papers.** There are several rocks on which many school papers go to their doom. The first is the attempt to do too much — to have quite or nearly as many departments as does a large city daily. This demands an organization too complex for untrained pupils. The rule suggested in connection with the class organization applies here also : *Have the paper no more complex than the children themselves wish to make it after careful consideration.*

The second rock is that of the indifference of those pupils who like neither to write nor to plan. Shipwreck at this point can be averted only by making contribution to the paper voluntary. The important thing is to have the project a success from the start, and this is almost certain to result if only those pupils who are genuinely interested in the paper manage its affairs. And as time goes on, many others gradually become interested. This has been demonstrated again and again. When the pupils who stay outside find that they are held responsible for their best work at all times, they soon lose their reluctance to have their compositions appear in the paper. Often their class spirit is strong enough to enlist their efforts.

Another rock is the too frequent publication of the paper. If the department heads are to do actual editorial work, going over all material contributed, besides writing their own

editorials and news items, they will need time. A good paper appearing once a month, or even in alternate months, is far more likely to be a success than one issued weekly. From six to eight numbers a year are usually sufficient.

If the school is fortunate enough to have a printing plant, it is to be congratulated. However, some of the best school papers are composed of individual papers fastened together. This type of paper naturally cannot circulate to any extent, but this is not a disadvantage in the elementary school. It can be passed around to principal, supervisors, and the class members. One very successful school paper had the following departments, each under its own head: editorials, foreign news, domestic news, school happenings, jokes, stories, and advertisements. The advertising pages were posted on the school bulletin board. The entire paper was written by hand.

Since the class-paper project affords abundant opportunity for the best kind of motivated written work, it is evident that all composition instruction may be given in connection with this and other projects.

**Other projects.** Other projects that work well in these higher grades are concerned with subjects of general interest that do not occur in the ordinary school categories. Such subjects as *safety first*, *thrift*, *community needs*, and the like offer excellent opportunities for investigation, reporting, and discussion, with the final gathering up into a booklet of the material that is most significant. The projects that are carried on in the fields of history, geography, hygiene, and elementary science offer the same opportunities for genuine speaking and writing. See also Chapter Ten.

The following methods in oral and written composition teaching will find their motivation in the many pressing needs for power to use clear, exact, forceful, and pleasing English.



## COMPOSITION METHODS

**The paragraph as a finished product.** The composition methods discussed in this section concern the paragraph as the unit of organized related thoughts; the sentence as the unit of thought expression; and the word as a worker, each having its own function in sentence building.

The methods for the lower grades have emphasized the arrangement of ideas in their regular order, but in these higher grades special attention should be given to the paragraph as a finished product having a beginning, a middle part consisting of interesting details arranged in their natural order, and an appropriate end. It is not necessary to teach the topic sentence, for, as a matter of fact, a majority of paragraphs do not have one, and the subject may well be left for the senior high school. But the pupils of these higher grades should study the paragraph as a unit whose material is carefully classified. Take, for instance, the following paragraph:

## THE ROAD OF THE LOVING HEART

Settled for his health in the tropical island of Samoa, Robert Louis Stevenson promptly won the love of the natives. At one time, when one of their chiefs and his followers were imprisoned, Stevenson visited the men in their captivity and took them many luxuries. On their release from prison, they came to thank their friend for his kindness. Wishing to commemorate it by some work of lasting benefit to him, they decided to make a road through the bush to his house. The work involved enormous labor, but it was undertaken with enthusiasm. When the road was finished, it was opened with a great feast, and named "The Road of the Loving Heart."

The author of this paragraph had a purpose. He wished to give the reader an appreciation of the relations existing between Stevenson and the natives. He therefore selected his facts carefully and arranged them so that the paragraph

would have an introduction, a main part, and an end that would leave in the reader's mind the point of the story.

Let the pupils read this and other similar paragraphs, and find the parts. Then have them reproduce the paragraphs in their own words in the main, but with the employment of some of the author's expressions that are particularly happy.

From this time on, the pupils should add to their other composition aims this one of classifying their material in the best way. Put on the blackboard some of the compositions written in class that illustrate the new aim. Let the pupils always give attention to this matter when preparing either oral or written one-paragraph compositions. It will be a good plan to have them copy into their notebooks something like the following if the textbook does not suggest similar rules:

Choose your subject, making sure that it will interest your classmates.

Limit the subject so that you can tell interesting details in a single paragraph.

Classify your material. Decide how you will begin the story; select and arrange in their natural order the facts for the main part of your story; and plan for a strong ending.

The habit of following these directions faithfully when writing one-paragraph compositions will be of inestimable benefit in all subjects. They should become the basis of criticism of all written work, no matter what subject it concerns. The fact that the pupils are learning to talk and to write in order to improve their English *at all times* should never be lost from sight.

The study of the paragraph as one part of a larger whole should also be continued. Review what is said about this in the preceding chapter. And while the writing of one well-organized paragraph that has its thoughts expressed in good sentences with some regard to variety, and that is free from common errors of grammatical usage or of capitalization and

punctuation, should remain a minimum aim, no pupil who can do more should be held back. Many seventh- and eighth-grade children become thoroughly capable of planning and writing compositions requiring several paragraphs. To forbid their doing so would be unjustifiable. No pupil should be held back by the limitations of his classmates. Read once more what is said on this subject on page 199.

**How to use topics.** Analyzing prose matter and listing the topics the author obviously had in mind, helps the pupils to learn how to organize their own thoughts and express them in two or more paragraphs. Some teachers require pupils to write their topics at the head of the composition. This seems artificial, since the topics are for the help of the writer and not for the guidance of the reader. If the composition is so written that teacher and classmates cannot get the main topics from the composition itself, it is a poor composition, no matter how well selected the topics at the head of the paper may be.

It is good practice for pupils to exchange compositions and for each to make an outline of the one he receives. If it is not possible to do this because of poor arrangement, the composition should go back to the writer. If an outline is made, it is interesting for all concerned to compare it with the one previously made by the writer, and see to what extent the two agree.

If a teacher wishes to see the outline on which a composition is based, she can ask that the outline be handed in with the composition, but as a separate item. It may be written on a slip of paper and attached to the composition.

#### SENTENCE STUDY

**The purpose of sentence study.** In these grades the sentence study should have as its aim the gaining of greater clearness, force, and smoothness. All the earlier types of

sentence study should be continued *as long as they are needed*. The work should be based wholly on the types of errors in sentence form that are noted in either the oral or written work of the pupils.

Simple, complex, and compound sentences should be taught only for the help they afford in accomplishing the purpose outlined in the preceding paragraph. It has been argued that this grammatical knowledge is not needed, as an equal degree of skill in handling sentences is often acquired without any knowledge of the grammar of the sentence. This is true, but it is no argument against making the acquisition of the skill a conscious self-help process that all the less gifted, as well as the more gifted, may use effectively. Some boys plunge fearlessly into deep water and swim as naturally as does a fish, but the majority need swimming instruction. And even though a teacher might gain the desired ends without teaching the grammar of sentences, she would do so at great inconvenience, because the use of grammatical terms often saves lengthy explanations. But above all, the sentence-grammar that is motivated by a real need and is immediately applied to the relief of that need affords the pupil one of his most valuable self-helps.

**Compound subjects and predicates.** The simple sentence offers nothing new to be learned, the pupils having used it freely and having already learned that it is composed of two necessary parts, the subject and the predicate. The name only is new, and this name is so descriptive of the sentence that it requires no effort to master it. The simple sentence is a sentence that has but one subject and one predicate, and completely expresses a thought. The compound subject and predicate may be taught solely because children often use the wrong verb form in the predicate after a compound subject. While drill on simple sentences containing compound subjects and predicates may well be secured by means of



sentences given in the textbook, this drill should be supplemented by sentence building in order to enforce the practical value of the facts learned. Directions like the following may be used :

Express in a simple sentence with a compound subject a thought about two or more games that you like to play.

In a simple sentence with a compound predicate, tell two things that you did before coming to school this morning.

Tell two things that you learned yesterday in your geography lesson, using a simple sentence with a compound predicate.

**A problem in sentence study.** It is important that the study of complex and compound sentences have as a starting point a real composition problem. Take two contrasted compositions like the following, for instance :

The rehearsal for the Christmas play was over. I sat down on the floor to look at a book. I had on my fancy costume. The sash was long and thin. It flew over the gas heater. I did not know this and the sash was soon ablaze. In my excitement I tried to get up. That was the worst thing to do. Just then Mother came in. She extinguished the flames with her hands. The ashes of my beautiful sash fell to the floor.

The rehearsal for the Christmas play was over, and I sat down on the floor to look at a book. I had on my fancy costume. The sash, which was long and thin, flew over the gas heater. I did not know this, and the sash was soon ablaze. In my excitement I tried to get up, but this was the worst thing for me to do. Just then Mother came in and extinguished the flames with her hands. The ashes of my beautiful sash fell to the floor.

Have both compositions read, and then ask which is the more pleasing, and why. The sentence monotony of the first immediately impresses most children, and the way is then open to show how thoughts were united in the second. Tell the pupils that thoughts were combined in two different ways, and that it will be helpful to study the two kinds of sentences that were produced.

**The compound sentence.** Since the compound sentence presents little difficulty, it should be studied first. One way would be to take the compound sentences of the second story on page 235 as a starting point. Another is to teach the compound sentence first, and then have the pupils discover which of the sentences in the story are compound and what thoughts are united to produce them. The second method is followed here, because it leaves the composition problem to be intelligently solved by the pupils after they have learned the necessary facts.

The simplest way is to begin with two short simple sentences that are closely related :

The rain came down in torrents.  
I was thoroughly soaked.

Ask the children to prove that these are simple sentences. Show that each sentence expresses an independent thought, and then ask if there is any relation between the thoughts. The relation is obvious, and justifies joining the sentences.

The rain came down in torrents and I was thoroughly soaked.

The thoughts were united because they are related to each other, and the longer sentence is more pleasing than the two shorter ones. Ask what name was given to a subject or a predicate formed by joining words. The word *compound* being given, it is easy for the pupils to see that *compound* is a good name for a sentence that unites two thoughts but leaves each as independent as before.

This should be followed by the study of drill sentences, such as are given in any textbook; then the class will be ready to go back to the composition and find the compound sentences that were formed by joining two simple sentences. Sometimes it is a good plan in this early work to tell how many there are, there being in this case three. Ask the pupils to find one simple sentence with a compound predicate. ✓

It would be almost a miracle if some pupil did not select as compound the one complex sentence in the composition. Should this occur, it need cause no anxiety. Simply throw upon the class the responsibility of determining whether the thoughts in that sentence were joined in such a way that each simple sentence remained independent. They will readily see that one clause, *The sash flew over the gas heater*, remains independent as before, but that the other simple sentence was changed in such a way that it no longer completely expresses a thought. It is now like the groups of words that are sometimes incorrectly written as sentences. It is only when joined to the other simple sentence that in this form it helps to express a thought. It is enough at first simply to recognize this sentence as different, leaving it to be studied after much drill on compound sentences.

**The correct use of compound sentences.** The compound sentence should be recognized first of all as a means of securing variety in sentence form by combining thoughts in such a way that they do not lose their independence. Then take the long run-on sentence, the special pet form of many children, and have the class prove that it is a compound sentence, but that it includes too many clauses. Suggest that as a rule it is a good plan to express not more than two independent thoughts in a compound sentence. L

Another type of error in the use of compound sentences is the joining of thoughts that are not closely related. Should the fact that the following is not a good compound sentence be definitely taught, or should the common sense of the class be relied upon to criticize it wisely? L

The sun was shining and I had a toothache.

In order that no confusion may result, there should be much drill on compound sentences before taking up complex. Drill on lists of sentences all of which are compound, such as is

usually provided for in textbooks, is useful to fix in mind the facts. If the drill ends there, it has not achieved its aim. When the compound sentence is thoroughly understood, have the pupils find the simple and compound sentences in paragraphs, using some of their own compositions for the purpose. In every case, request proof. The simple and the compound sentence will not be really understood until they can be found readily when mingled with complex sentences, as they usually are. The complex sentence will be set aside as offering a problem yet to be solved. Assignments like the following are helpful :

Copy from a composition in your notebook five compound sentences. In class be ready to prove that each sentence is compound, and that its clauses are closely enough related to justify your joining them.

Above all, keep before the pupils the fact that the use of the different sentence forms is one of the most effective means of securing a pleasing sentence variety.

**The complex sentence.** There are several intelligent paths of approach to the complex-sentence idea. One way is to begin by comparing a complex sentence with a simple sentence of the same meaning :

I shall go soon.

I shall go when the rain stops.

Have the children tell what kind of sentence the first is, and give its subject and predicate. Then get the statement that the word *soon* is an adverb because it shows *when* I shall go. Ask then what words in the second sentence give the same information. They find that the words *when the rain stops* do precisely the same work that is done by the adverb *soon* in the first sentence; that is, they do the work of an adverb. The fact that the group of words has a subject and a predicate shows that it is a clause; but because it works for



the other clause by modifying the verb *go*, it is not independent, but dependent. The class will then be ready for the name *complex*, applied to many things that are not simple.

Another method of approach is to start out with a clause sentence found in the work of the pupils. This will simply be a review of what has been taught from a different point of view in the sixth grade. Suppose this were the sentence found :

Before the automobile overturned. ✓

The children find that there is a subject and a predicate, but that the thought is incomplete. One feels like asking, "What happened before the automobile overturned?" The sentence is then completed :

A loud explosion was heard before the automobile overturned.

Then have the children discover that the clauses were joined in such a way that the second is not independent, because it tells *when* the explosion was heard. It is an adverbial clause and is dependent. The word *subordinate* may also be taught, because it is in itself a useful word to add to the vocabulary, and because when its meaning has been developed, its appropriateness is obvious. ✓

In emphasizing the function of the subordinate clause, it is well to consider phrase modifiers also. The word *phrase* will be familiar already because of its use in connection with verbs and prepositions. Sentences like the following may be compared :

My brother has a small pony.

My brother has a pony of small size. ✓

My brother has a pony that is small.

The adjective *small* in the first sentence, the phrase of *small size* in the second, and the clause *that is small* in the third all describe the pony. They are therefore all adjective modifiers, one being an adjective, one an adjective phrase, and the last an adjective clause. There seems to be no good reason for teaching the noun clause, because it occurs much less

frequently and is not a form that children would consciously adopt. If the children happen to stumble upon one and recognize it as being neither an adjective nor an adverbial clause, let them try to discover what work it does in the sentence in which it occurs, and name it accordingly. The chances are good that a child discerning enough to discover it will be shrewd enough to find out what its function is.

As a result of this study of sentence forms, the children should understand the functional difference between simple, compound, and complex sentences, and should fully appreciate how the use of these forms contributes to sentence variety and to force. It should not, however, result in an effort to drop the simple sentence. The study of paragraphs like the following serves to reveal how the use of a series of short simple sentences gives emphasis, in this case to the loneliness of the place. It is taken from *Kidnapped*.

It was half-past twelve of a very cold night. I was almost frozen. I took off my shoes and walked to and fro upon the sand, barefoot and beating my breast with infinite weariness. There was no sound of man or cattle. Not a cock crowed. I heard only the surf beating in the distance. By the sea that hour in the morning, and in a place so desert-like and lonesome, I had a kind of fear.

Well-written paragraphs of this sort are excellent for teaching the value of variety in sentence length. They are also useful for exploding the idea many children harbor, that the simple sentence is necessarily a short sentence. The children will be astonished to find that the extract is made up wholly of simple sentences of varying length, although they should not be expected to make this discovery until they know something about verbals.

The knowledge of sentence form applied. The pupil should never lose sight of the fact that he has been studying sentence forms solely for the purpose of adding variety and force to his own oral and written expression. For the time

being let him concentrate his attention on this matter, going over every composition or letter to find sentences that can be improved. In the course of time he should realize that he can use the complex sentence to make an important thought stand out prominently, by using a subordinate clause for the thought that in some way works for the important one to be emphasized. He should also find out how the use of phrases instead of clauses sometimes gives smoothness to a sentence. ✓

Mr. Brown, who was formerly our state representative, has been nominated for Congress. ✓

Mr. Brown, our former state representative, has been nominated for Congress.

Much practice in changing the forms of given sentences, preferably sentences taken from the pupil's compositions, helps to cultivate the power to select from various expressions of the same thought the sentence that has the greatest clearness, force, and smoothness.

**Ways of securing force.** Reversing the order of subject and predicate as a means of gaining force has already been discussed. Another means is the proper placing of modifiers, whether these modifiers are words, phrases, or clauses. A grammar published many years ago used the following advertisement as an illustration of wrong arrangement: ✓

Wanted, a strong riding horse for a young lady weighing eight hundred pounds.

This is another of the occasions when a little fun adds enthusiasm to work. Almost all textbooks give sentences that are ludicrous because of wrong arrangement of the parts, and the children like to work with them. But here, again, sentences gleaned from the written work of the class are especially valuable, because they keep before the pupils the practical nature of what is being studied.

**Sentence building.** Drill in constructing sentences to meet fixed requirements is very valuable, because it serves more than almost any other exercise to make clear the functions of the parts of a sentence and the way in which the parts work together. Here are some suggestive directions:

1. Build a sentence from these suggestions: subject substantive, *automobile*; predicate verb, *dashed*; subject substantive modified by an article and another adjective; predicate verb modified by an adverbial clause showing *where* the automobile dashed.

2. Start with the simple sentence, *The sun was shining brightly*. Make two complex sentences, the first modifying *sun* by an adjective clause, and the second modifying *was shining* by an adverbial clause. Finally make a sentence containing both of the modifiers you used in the other sentences.

3. Complete the sentence below, first by modifying the verb *left* by the adverb *early*; next by modifying the verb by an adverbial phrase; and lastly by modifying the verb by an adverbial clause.

I left the house —

Are any of the sentences you made simple? complex? Which sentence do you like best, and why?

**Analysis of sentences.** Analysis is the antithesis of the work discussed in the preceding section. Instead of building sentences by combining words, phrases, and clauses, it separates given sentences into these parts. Oral analysis only will be considered here. If a teacher wishes to use diagrams, she can easily find or devise a suitable form.

One purpose of teaching analysis is to afford additional help in appreciating how strong sentences are built up by other persons, in order that the pupil may build better ones himself and may test his own expressions if he is in doubt as to whether or not they are sentences. For this purpose, sentences not much more involved than those naturally used by the pupils should be used. As a rule compound sentences of not more than two clauses, and complex sentences of one independent and one subordinate clause, are sufficiently



difficult. The analysis consists simply in discovering how many distinct predicate verbs there are, this giving the clue to the number of clauses. If there is but one subject and predicate, the sentence is simple, and analysis consists simply in naming the predicate verb, the subject substantive, and all modifiers and connecting words. If the sentence has two distinct predicate verbs, it is either compound or complex. The sentence form is determined, and then each clause is analyzed as in the case of the simple sentence, the clause connectives being pointed out, and in case of the complex sentence the relation of the subordinate to the independent clause. ✓

No form is suggested, because the use of a stated form so frequently degenerates into parrot-like work. Clearness and exactness of statement being among the language aims, and having received much attention, the pupil should use the acquired skill in making his analysis. Uniformity is neither desirable nor essential, unless the class themselves discover that the form used by a certain pupil is simple and direct and they consequently adopt it for themselves. This is a self-help way to learn.

The most valuable function of analysis is to aid the pupil to interpret sentences encountered in his reading that are puzzling either because of their great length or because of the unusual order of the parts, or for both these reasons. Take, for instance, these lines from Longfellow's *Evangeline*:

In that delightful land which is washed by Delaware's waters,  
Guarding in sylvan shades the name of Penn the apostle,  
Stands on the banks of its beautiful stream the city he founded. ✓

Suppose that a pupil reads this sentence and is somewhat bewildered as to its meaning. He begins his analysis by reading once more the first line, and upon thoughtful consideration finds that it describes the *where* of some person or place

yet to be discovered. The next line read in the same thoughtful way tells what this as yet unknown person or place does to the name of Penn, but likewise gives no clue to the main thought of the sentence. On beginning the third line, he finds the verb *stands*, and gets a clue. He asks himself, "*What stands?*" and finds that it is a city. Taking up the thought at this point and going back to the beginning of the sentence, he discovers that the first line tells *where* the city stands and that the second tells in a poetic way what the city is doing there.

As far as his purpose in analyzing the sentence is concerned, he need go no further. Analysis of this sort should be discontinued the moment its purpose is accomplished. As a rule, locating the main verb and its subject, with the principal modifiers, is sufficient.

#### WORD STUDY

**The importance of word study.** The paragraph is important, since it embraces within itself the carefully organized thoughts regarding the subject. The sentence, as the effective expression of one or more of these thoughts, requires careful attention. The words that clothe the thoughts are vital, for upon their selection, no less than upon their arrangement within the sentences, depends the vividness and the beauty of the finished composition.

**Choosing words and using them effectively.** Did you ever think that words afford a means of transportation? Just as the auto truck, the freight car, or the steamer carries merchandise from one person to another, so spoken or written words, combined into sentences, convey ideas from one mind to another. It is important that the merchandise reach its destination in perfect condition. It is equally important that ideas reach their destination without change of any sort. This makes it essential that a person sending thoughts

select his words and frame his sentences as carefully as the merchant selects the containers for his goods.

In the junior high school the building up of an adequate vocabulary is of the utmost importance. Use all the means of vocabulary growth discussed in preceding chapters, and take advantage of all the projects of these highest grades for training the pupils still further to increase their stock of words. Here are some additional suggestions :

1. Train the pupils to notice the speech of educated people so that they will remember fine, forceful words that are used, and add them to their own vocabularies.

2. Train the pupils consciously to select words from the matter that they read in connection with any line of work. They should judge the force and the picturesqueness of words by the response of their own minds. Give much practice in reading descriptions like the following paragraph by Donald G. Mitchell :

Now comes a blinding flash from the clouds, and a quick, sharp clang clatters through the heavens and bellows among the hills. Then come the big drops of rain, pattering on the lawn and, most musically of all, on the roof above me.

When the selection has been read, ask the children to tell what they saw as they read, and what they heard. Have them explain why a *blinding flash* is a more expressive phrase than a *bright flash*. Have them study the words that express the rolling of the thunder, and so on. The last step is so thoroughly to saturate themselves with the passage that the same happy words and combinations of words will occur to them during a thunder shower.

3. Give much attention to synonyms. Have the pupils use their dictionaries to discover the finer shades of meaning in words.

4. Have the pupils learn the best names for the things they wish to talk about, the adjectives that best describe their characteristics, and the verbs that most vividly characterize their actions or their condition. Much of the time allotted to preparation for oral or written composition should be devoted to selecting the words that will best convey the thoughts from the mind of the speaker or writer to the mind of the hearer or reader.

5. Literature is so large a subject that it has not been considered in this book, although its close relation to composition is obvious. One way of utilizing literature in vocabulary building has been pointed out in No. 2 of this group of suggestions. But this is but one of the possibilities. Along with the other purposes for which you teach literature, keep always in mind the vocabulary needs of your pupils.

**Using words correctly.** In the lowest grades it has been recommended that the children simply repeat over and over sentences containing the correct form, so as to eradicate an incorrect form commonly used. Games afford the best means to secure this necessary repetition in those grades. Later, in the fifth and sixth grades, the same kind of drill was presupposed, but it was supplemented by teaching the functions of words in the sentence and classifying the types of error in accordance with the part of speech to which each belongs. It helps a child to wage war against verb errors to know that every sentence must have a verb, and that the commonest verbs are those that are most frequently misused. He appreciates that the verb gives the sentence its life and realizes the folly of destroying the force and the beauty of his sentence by employing an incorrect verb. The large number of pronoun forms that he finds; the knowledge that they are continually misused; the importance of selecting picturesque and exact adjectives and adverbs, and so on — all these matters become of greater importance to him when he faces in an intelligent way the problems involved. Moreover, the terminology of grammar makes discussion and explanation much easier than it would otherwise be.

In the seventh and eighth grades the study of word-grammar makes intelligent what has hitherto been done largely from imitation, and affords a self-help method of settling questions when in doubt. It is particularly helpful to the pupil whose bad habits of speech persist because of his home



and street life, but who is ambitious and wishes to know the reasons of things in order that he may help himself to overcome his bad habits. It is also very helpful to the child who hears a foreign language spoken at home, and who never seems able to get enough practice in repeating correct forms to establish their use. The predicament of the boy who said, "I know that I ought sometimes to say 'Tom and I' and sometimes 'Tom and me,' but how to tell which to use is too much for me," is a case in point. The grammar of the personal pronoun, thoroughly taught, and taught solely from the standpoint of function, would give such a boy precisely the help he so consciously needed.

*Personal  
make up  
a lesson*

It is not the purpose here to give much space to the teaching of word-grammar, but simply to illustrate the simple, inductive way in which it may be taught when the child understands precisely why he is to study the subject and knows that he will be expected to improve his own language as the result of the knowledge he gains. Here is a lesson on personal pronouns worked out to show how the subject may be taught, and revealing also why it is sometimes necessary to teach some other facts before the immediate goal can be attained.

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#### SELF-HELP IN USING PERSONAL PRONOUNS CORRECTLY

So far this term you have been drilling on correct verb forms. Studies made in all parts of the country show that more mistakes are made in the use of verbs than in the use of any other part of speech. Pronouns rank next to verbs as trouble makers.

Review thoroughly all that you have already learned about pronouns.

For several years you have been trying to form the habit of using personal pronouns correctly by repeating over and over again sentences containing the correct forms. But as you go on in life you may sometimes be

in doubt as to which of two forms you should use. This grammar lesson will give you a self-help method of determining which of two sentences like the following is correct :

Mother told *Ned* and *I* to return promptly. ✓

Mother told *Ned* and *me* to return promptly.

As pronouns do not work alone in sentences, it will be necessary to study verbs and pronouns together. Keep in mind what you are trying to learn. What is it?

Imagine that a boy uses the following sentences. Let us call him John.

I struck the ball.

The ball struck me.

What pronoun does John use in the first sentence in speaking of himself? What is the predicate verb of the first sentence? the subject substantive? What did John, or *I*, strike? Because *ball* received the action of the verb *struck*, — or, in other words, because *ball* was acted upon, — we call it the *object* of the verb *struck*.

Stop right here and make sure that you understand fully that *I* is the *subject* of the verb *struck* because it *performs the action*, and *ball* is the *object* of the verb because it *receives the action*.

Read the second sentence. What is the predicate verb? Why? What is the object of the verb? Why?

Since John used the personal pronoun *I* in one case when speaking of himself, and the personal pronoun *me* in the other, you see at once why pronouns are troublesome. Which of the pronouns *I* and *me* is the *subject* form? the *object* form? Let us see whether other personal pronouns change their forms in the same way.

The first sentence of each of the following pairs of sentences contains a pronoun used as the subject of a verb. The second sentence contains the same pronoun used as the object of a verb. In which cases is there a change of

form according to the way in which the pronoun is used?  
Which pronouns do not change their forms?

1. *You* write very well.  
Did the lightning frighten *you*?
2. *He* has a black pony.  
One day the pony kicked *him*.
3. *We* are going to New York.  
Uncle John will take *us* in his automobile.
4. *It* was a cunning baby.  
Mother held *it* in her lap.
5. *They* are hunting squirrels.  
Do the squirrels see *them*?
6. *She* gave a book to Mary.  
Mary thanked *her* for it.

Here are the subject forms: *I, you, he, she, it, we, they*.  
Here are the object forms: *me, you, him, her, it, us, them*.

If you are in doubt about which one of these forms to use, stop and think whether you wish to use the pronoun as the subject of a verb or as the object. Then choose the right form.

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Note that the lesson first sets before the class a purpose. A problem is to be solved, the problem being the selection of the personal pronoun to be used under special circumstances. The lesson is motivated at the outset.

The fact that pronouns do not work alone in sentences makes it necessary first to become familiar with the subject and the object of a verb. The pupil finds that the particular pronoun used changes its form according as it officiates as subject or as predicate, and goes on to discover whether or not other pronouns undergo a similar change. When this has been determined, the lesson gives the subject forms and the object forms. The pupil thoroughly familiarizes himself with these, and finds that he has created a means of self-help that in the future he can apply to similar problems when in

doubt. Of course, much drill should follow such a lesson, and it should frequently be reviewed.

A similar method may be employed in teaching the other necessary facts of word-grammar. The rule to follow is this: Teach only the facts that are necessary to enable the pupil to understand why certain forms are correct and certain others incorrect, thus making the choice of the correct form a simple matter.

**Supervised study.** The grammar lesson given above is so planned that the pupils can study it intelligently and arrive at the desired knowledge entirely independently. The supervised-study plan works particularly well with such a lesson. The period begins with the necessary review. This is followed by a statement of the problem to be solved. With this clearly in mind, study begins, the teacher being ready to help individuals whenever help is requested. When a fixed period of time has been devoted to individual study, the class resumes coöperative work. Now comes the time for testing results. This may be done by calling successively for the purpose of the lesson; the reason why a new fact about verbs needs to be learned and what the fact is; the discovery that some pronouns have one form when they are used as subjects, and another when they are used as objects; the scrutiny of other pronouns; and the final classifying of the pronoun forms in a way to make the knowledge serviceable, each point being fully discussed. Another method is to ask one or more pupils to explain the correct use of the pronouns as they might to a person who had not studied the subject. This involves having every step in mind and fully understanding it. ✓

#### OTHER METHODS OF SELF-HELP TEACHING

**The importance of self-teaching.** It is not enough for pupils to learn to study from books while under the eye of the teacher. Sooner or later ambitious girls and boys must be-



come self-teaching in order that they may help themselves when neither textbook nor teacher is at hand. Take, for instance, the matter of social and business letter forms. It is the custom in some places to teach in the elementary school the writing of formal social notes, telegrams, post-office money orders, and the like. Children will have little use for these forms for years to come, if ever. The school should prepare them for helping themselves when the time of need arrives. The group projects outlined in the lesson below illustrate how this may be done.

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### GROUP PROJECTS

Outside of school, most people write little else than letters, unless we except the occasional writing of telegrams and advertisements; making out money orders, bills, checks, and receipts; and at rare intervals, if at all, formal notes of invitation or of acceptance. The making out of bills and receipts you have, of course, studied in connection with your arithmetic lessons. How many of the other activities mentioned do you find that you need to practice *now*?

A very wise man once wrote the following words:

Knowledge is of two kinds: we know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can get information upon it.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

There are some things that are best learned when one needs to put them into practice. The important thing is *to know where to get the necessary information* when it is needed.

As a means of discovering what ability you have to teach yourself an important lesson when you need it, divide the class into five sections, each section taking one of these subjects: writing a telegram; making out a post-office money order; making out and signing a

check ; writing a lost or found or for sale advertisement ; writing a formal invitation to a dinner party and a formal acceptance or declination of the invitation. Each pupil will work independently in finding out how to perform the group activity. Try to bring in the most helpful report submitted.

Some of the activities suggested require the use of blank forms that largely explain themselves. If your topic requires a blank form, get a copy, and find out by asking some person who can give you the necessary help any facts you cannot discover for yourself. Some require a very economical use of words. Which ones? In class be prepared to report on your topic, stating what occasions in life require the use of the item on which you are reporting ; where you obtained the blank form, if any ; how you gained the information you needed. Submit a *perfect example* to the class as a model.

If any of you wish to preserve now some of the information gained as the result of this investigation, use your notebooks. Your notebook, you remember, is to be your individual English aid when you no longer have a textbook to consult. Should you later need to use one of the forms, consult your notebook, or get the necessary information as it was obtained for these reports.

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#### WRITTEN COMPOSITION

**Self-help methods of learning.** The projects discussed in the previous sections of this chapter require written as well as oral expression. Little that is new remains to be taught regarding capitalization and punctuation, and that little should be learned by the pupils as independently as possible. The punctuation of the compound and the complex sentence, for instance, should be taught when these forms of sentences are to be consciously used by the pupils. The punctuation is then recognized simply as a means of making it easier

for the reader to interpret the sentence. The rule for a new use of the capital should be formulated by the pupils after they have discovered the reason for the use. This is the self-help way of learning. The following lesson illustrates the method.

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**PROJECT: MAKING RULES FOR CERTAIN USES OF  
CAPITAL LETTERS**

From time to time you have had your attention directed to certain uses of capital letters, have had drill in using the letters correctly, and have learned the rules concerned. But there is another way to learn. Thousands of men and women who attended school but a short time have learned by *observing* how capitals were used in the letters, papers, and books they read; they thought about these uses until they discovered good reasons for them; and then they made for themselves rules that they at once began to apply. This is the self-help method — the method that you must all follow when you no longer have books and teachers to direct your work.

**MAKING RULES FOR THE USE OF CAPITALS** ✓

Each of the following exercises should result in a clearly expressed rule for the use of capital letters.

I. In your reading you come upon the following sentences:

In all climates spring is beautiful. In the South it is intoxicating.

If your eyes are sharp, you will discover a new use of the capital, even though you may not at first see the reason for it. But from time to time you find in papers and books sentences like the following:

1. Corn is raised abundantly in the West.
2. I once lived five miles west of Chicago.

3. In the South cotton is king.
4. To reach the Court House, walk two blocks east to Main Street, go north to the Armory, and then walk one block west.
5. Captain Peary explored the trackless North.

By this time, if you have used your eyes to good purpose, you have noticed facts enough to help you form an important rule.

Read the rules you make, select one that is very clearly stated, and copy it into your notebooks.

II. From time to time you notice in letters the following salutations and endings, not necessarily in the same letter. Make a rule for the use of capitals.

<i>Salutations</i>	<i>Endings</i>
My dear Friend,	Your sincere friend,
Dear Mother,	Your loving mother,
Dear Cousin,	Your affectionate cousin,
My own dear Son,	Your loving son,
Dear old Pal,	Your faithful pal,

Read and compare the rules, and write the best one in your notebooks.

III. Review all that you know about abbreviations. Study the first pair of the following sentences, and explain why *doctor* begins with a small letter and *Dr.* with a capital. Explain similar uses of capitals and small letters in the remaining pairs of sentences:

1. My grandfather was a doctor.  
He was a partner of Dr. Bullock's.
2. Should you like to be a president?  
My great-grandfather knew President Jackson.
3. Every large city has a superintendent of schools.  
We sent a class letter to Superintendent Wheelock.
4. Every state has two senators at Washington.  
The discussion was opened by Senator Reeves.

Make a rule for the use of capitals in writing the names of titles applied to persons. Compare the rules made, and select the best one as before.

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**Letter writing.** While reports, compositions on various themes, and all the varied types of written work required by the newspaper project are valuable modes of expression, letter writing remains the most important form of written composition. It should be emphasized in all grades. Review all that has been said in previous chapters about writing letters. There is little to add. The important matters are to write naturally, convincingly, and in an entertaining way when writing social letters, and simply, pointedly, and courteously when writing business letters. In both cases the form must be that of established usage and must be exactly right.

The following paragraphs from a letter sent by General Pershing to the officers of the United States Army in 1923 may well form the basis of a profitable discussion of letter writing:

Correspondence is as definitely an index of character as either verbal expression or conduct, and correct usage requires constant effort in the choice of words, the construction of sentences, and the arrangement of paragraphs.

Words used to express an idea should be carefully selected and so employed as to convey clearly and forcefully the exact meaning intended and no other. Sentences should be logically arranged in such sequence that the development of thought may be easily followed and the salient points readily recognized.

It should rarely be necessary to write letters for practice in these grades. If the English work is based on projects, and the school life is enriched by excursions, by investigations of community affairs, and by correspondence with distant schools, the letters actually required will offer abundant opportunity for letter writing.

**Using tests and measurements.** Train both yourself and your pupils in using suitable scales for measuring the quality of the written compositions. Use also tests that are designed to diagnose and to drill. Review Chapter Eleven.

## GRAMMAR FACTS THAT AFFORD A MEANS OF SELF-HELP

The following paragraphs outline the functional grammar of the seventh and eighth grades. They should be studied in connection with the grammar outlined on pages 213 to 215.

## SENTENCE FORMS

Teach simple, complex, and compound sentences for the general purpose of securing in oral and written expression greater variety in sentence form, and also as a means of gaining clearness and force by selecting the sentence form that is best adapted to the thought to be expressed. Teach each sentence form also for the additional reasons given below.

1. *The simple sentence.* Teach the simple sentence as the form that, regardless of its length, has but one subject substantive and one predicate verb. Teach the compound subject in order to secure the use of the correct form of the predicate verb, and the compound predicate verb in order to make clear its relation to the subject substantive.

2. *The compound sentence.* Teach the compound sentence for its convenience in expressing independent, but closely related, thoughts. Show that the long run-on sentence is the kind of compound sentence *not* to use. Train the pupils to avoid combining in a compound sentence thoughts that are not closely related. Teach the common connectives employed, emphasizing *and* and *but* as illustrating respectively the idea of similarity and the idea of contrast. Teach the punctuation of the compound sentence.

3. *The complex sentence.* Teach the complex sentence as a means of indicating the relative importance of the ideas expressed in a sentence. Show that the principal clause contains the main thought, and that the subordinate clause as a rule performs the function of either an adjective or an adverbial modifier. Teach carefully the common connectives used in complex sentences, not by having the list of connectives committed to memory, but by training the pupils to judge whether the connecting word secures the independence of the clause concerned, or whether it makes the clause work for the principal clause. Teach the punctuation of the complex sentence. (The noun clause need not be taught, since it is not consciously selected by elementary school pupils as a form of expression. Moreover, when used, mistakes are not usually made.)

## ANALYSIS OF SENTENCES

Teach verbal analysis as a means of testing original sentences, and particularly as a means of comprehending sentences encountered in reading that are either very long and involved or that have their elements arranged in a transposed order. Unnecessarily minute analysis should be avoided. When the immediate purpose of analysis has been accomplished, it need proceed no further.

## THE PARTS OF SPEECH

1. *Nouns.* Continue to teach nouns as the names of the things we talk, write, or think about. Teach compound words, many of which are nouns, in order that the pupils may distinguish between those that should be written solid, those that are hyphenated, and the phrases, such as *car fare*, that are sometimes incorrectly written as if they were compound words. In connection with verb study, teach the agreement of the verb with the subject substantive in number and person.

2. *Pronouns.* A considerable percentage of the common errors of speech are concerned with the pronoun. Teach the inflections of the personal pronoun in closest connection with verb study. The correct use of the nominative and accusative forms is altogether determined by the relation existing between the pronoun and the verb. Since nouns do not change their forms when used as subjects and objects, the transitive verb is taught solely to help pupils to select the correct pronoun form, and for this reason transitive verbs, objects as completing the meaning of transitive verbs, and the correct pronoun forms should be taught together, the pronoun form providing the motive. Teach relative pronouns in closest connection with the study of complex sentences, the selection of the relative pronoun being determined by its antecedent, and the case form of the pronoun selected being determined by its relation to the predicate verb of the clause it introduces. Teach interrogative pronouns in order to secure the correct case form. Teach the adjective function of certain possessive forms of pronouns, and treat these words as possessive adjectives, since the work done by a word alone determines the part of speech to which it belongs. Teach the predicate pronoun in order to secure the correct use of pronouns after linking verbs. Teach agreement of pronouns and verbs.

3. *Verbs.* Teach the number and person of verbs in order to secure agreement in these particulars between a verb and its subject substantive. Teach enough of tense to enable you to show that the form of almost all verbs changes in the third person singular of the present tense, and that this variation, together with the many forms of the verb *to be*, makes necessary the rule for the agreement of verbs with their subject substantives in tense as well as in person and number. Teach transitive and intransitive verbs in order to make intelligent the selection of the correct form of a pronoun used as the object of a transitive verb, and in order to secure the correct use of pronouns after linking verbs. In connection with linking verbs, teach the pupils to distinguish between the use of a predicate adjective after a linking verb and an adverb as a modifier of a verb.

Teach enough about regular and irregular verbs to make it convenient to discuss intelligently the forms of the verbs that are frequently misused. Teach verbals in order to avoid "dangling participles" in sentences, and to distinguish between predicate verbs and verb forms that do the work of some other part of speech — participles and gerunds — although it is not necessary to use the latter term, if *verbal noun* is preferred because it is self-explanatory.

Teach the importance of the verb in the sentence, and give much attention to the selection of suitable verbs and to the correction of verb errors. Teach the spelling of difficult verb forms, particularly of *ed* and *ing* forms, and the varying forms of verbs ending in *y*.

4. *Adjectives.* Teach adjectives as the modifiers of nouns and pronouns. Teach the comparison of adjectives in order to secure the selection of the correct form when comparing the qualities of things, and also for the purpose of training pupils consciously to avoid the abuse of the superlative form. Teach the predicate adjective in order to avoid confusing predicate adjectives and adverbial modifiers of verbs. Continue the struggle against overworked adjectives, and give much attention to the selection of suitable adjectives, and to synonyms. Teach the spelling of troublesome adjectives, notably the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives ending in *y*.

5. *Adverbs.* Teach adverbs as modifiers of verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Teach the comparison of adverbs in order to insure the use of the correct forms. Give much attention to the selection of suitable adverbs, and the avoidance of those that are habitually overworked. Distinguish constantly between adjectives and adverbs, particularly after linking verbs.



6. *Prepositions.* Teach the preposition as a word introducing a phrase that may perform the work of either an adjective or an adverb. In other words, teach the preposition as the word that introduces a phrase, the entire phrase doing the work of a single part of speech. Give particular attention to the form of the pronoun when used as the object of a preposition in a phrase. If *at*, *in* and *into*, and *between* and *among* are misused in your class, give much drill on the correct use. Give much attention to securing variety in expression by using prepositional phrases frequently instead of adjectives or adverbs, or instead of adjective or adverbial clauses.

7. *Conjunctions.* Give special attention to conjunctions in connection with the study of compound and complex sentences. It does not seem necessary to have lists of coördinating and subordinating conjunctions committed to memory. Indeed, when children learn these lists, they are more likely to decide whether a sentence is complex or compound by trying to recall to which group the conjunction used belongs, than by thinking whether the clauses are so joined that both remain independent or so joined that one is subordinated to the other. In fact, it is not necessary to learn the terms *coördinating conjunction* and *subordinating conjunction* in the elementary school. Give much attention to conjunctions that work in pairs, such as *neither — nor*, in order to insure the use of the correct verb form.

8. *Interjections.* See page 215.

#### FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Do you feel certain that you are utilizing all the self-help possibilities of your pupils? Scrutinize closely your method of conducting a so-called recitation and see if you are doing some things that your pupils should do for themselves.

2. How large a proportion of your pupils are still largely dependent upon you when a new topic is to be developed? Is it fair to judge the quality of a teacher's work by the proportion of her pupils who require little help in supervised study?

3. If possible, study and discuss with other teachers the Dalton plan of study and teaching. What are its advantages to the more able students? to the weaker pupils?

4. Is it more desirable that your pupils leave the junior high school with a large body of facts or with well-developed self-help habits? Why? Is there any necessary gulf between knowledge and power? How can the two be developed in conjunction?

## FOR READING AND STUDY

Refer to the lists at the close of Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight, and also to the lists at the close of Chapters Ten and Eleven. Study also the following :

DAVIS. *The Technique of Teaching*. The Macmillan Company.  
(Read Chapter IV.)

DEWEY. *The Dalton Laboratory Plan*. E. P. Dutton & Co.

MCGREGOR. *Supervised Study*. The Macmillan Company.

PARKHURST. *Education on the Dalton Plan*. E. P. Dutton & Co.  
*Twentieth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*.  
Part I. Public School Publishing Company. (Read Chapter  
IV, "New Materials for the Junior High School.")

The literature devoted to the junior high school is very large and is constantly growing. Form the habit of keeping in touch with the articles in leading educational journals and with the newer books that are appearing from time to time.

## CHAPTER TEN

### INFORMAL LANGUAGE TEACHING

#### WHY INFORMAL LANGUAGE LESSONS ARE NEEDED

*Prepare a report in some other work in an O.C. cooperate c. when teachers*

THE preceding four chapters concern the more formal teaching of composition. The lessons are designed to cultivate the power to think and to express related thoughts in clear, accurate, exact language. Some pupils acquire this power and use it in oral and written composition exercises, but neglect it at other times. The teacher must be on the alert and seize all opportunities for language training afforded by activities whose immediate aim is not a language habit or skill. In other words, the teacher must do more or less informal language teaching. This chapter gives suggestions for the work. Read once more the section on "Informal Conversation" beginning on page 12.

#### WORTH-WHILE ACTIVITIES

The relation between the language value and the more specific value of a worth-while activity. Much is demanded of the schools in these days, and unless all who control the curriculum are on their guard, time will be given to matters that are not essential. It is important to note that the language value of a worth-while activity is dependent on the same characteristics that make it valuable for other purposes. Some of these characteristics are considered in the following section. It is doubtful whether any school activity that does not illustrate at least several of them has much real worth.

**Characteristics of a worth-while activity.** A worth-while activity is one that serves a useful purpose. One characteristic of such an activity is stated in each of the following paragraphs, and it is pointed out that worth-while conversation also has the same quality. In order to have in mind a con-

crete example, let us imagine that a fourth-grade class are to make a doll house for a younger group of children.

1. *A worth-while activity is motivated.* In planning to do something for other children, and deciding what to do, the pupils talk with a definite purpose. *The worth-while conversation is also motivated.*

2. *A worth-while activity is based on the children's experience.* In order to plan a doll house, the pupils must use the knowledge of houses gained by experience. Their own experiences are all that children have to talk about. *The worth-while conversation also is based on experience.*

3. *A worth-while activity adds to previous experience.* As the making of the doll house is discussed, the pupils get from the suggestions of their classmates and from the constructive questions of the teacher new ideas about making such a house and its furniture. Talking about these new features often requires the use of new words to express the new ideas. *The worth-while conversation also adds to former experience.*

4. *A worth-while activity requires thought.* To make the best possible doll house, the children must observe; they must compare ideas and choose between opposing ones; they must express their ideas in an orderly way. *The worth-while conversation also requires thought, since thought alone provides the something worth saying that justifies speech.*

5. *A worth-while activity demands initiative and self-activity.* Initiative and self-activity result from an inner urge, and imply originality. As the various objects for the doll house are made, each should express the original thought of the maker, modified by the criticism and the suggestion through which his classmates in turn express their originality. *The worth-while conversation also expresses original ideas.*

#### THE ART OF QUESTIONING

**The importance of questioning.** The question is probably the most effective single tool that the teacher has for securing thought and its orderly expression. It has been said that a good questioner is a good teacher. The statement is probably true, although questioning is by no means all there is to teaching. The question method is fundamental. It secures



thought by directing the pupil's attention to what is essential ; by leading him to see the relative worth of facts ; by emphasizing cause and effect ; by training him to pass from phase to phase of a subject in an orderly way ; and by requiring him to form conclusions based on the facts discussed. It is also a convenient means of review and of a certain type of testing.

There is no royal road to the goal. The best questioners are those who have long schooled themselves in the task through intelligent study and conscientious practice. There are undoubtedly some teachers who question well almost instinctively, but they are few in number.

The references at the close of this chapter that are concerned with the art of questioning will well repay study. The study should be followed by much practice. In the meantime here are a few suggestions that may be immediately helpful :

1." *Keep in mind your motive for questioning.* If you wish simply to review facts, you will ask direct, straightforward questions. If you wish to start a stream of thought, you will ask questions that a pupil can answer only by considering previous experience or new facts set before him by the questions asked. If you wish to test power, you will ask a question whose answer involves the application to new matter of a principle already taught. This type of question reviews a principle by requiring the child to apply it under new conditions.

2. *Keep before your eyes in true perspective the matter about which you are to question.* If the pupils are to direct their attention to salient points, you must have clearly in mind the relative importance of the facts. Aim at the high lights.

3. *In preparing a lesson, write out a series of questions.* Test each to find out if answering it will demand all the power the pupil has. Frame the same question in several ways, and try to judge by past experience which form will be most effective.

4. *Do not hastily attribute poor answers to ignorance or heedlessness or dullness of intellect.* They may be due to some defect in your question. Note carefully the answers you secure. They will often reveal clearly where the trouble with your question lies.

**Types of questions to avoid.** There are certain types of questions that young teachers sometimes fall into the habit of using, to the serious weakening of their teaching. Here are some types to avoid:

1. *Avoid the petty question* The petty question is one that is unnecessarily minute. The following illustration is by no means exceptional. A second-grade class had read this paragraph from a reader:

A long time ago the magpie was the only bird that knew how to build a nest. The other birds came and asked her to teach them.

Here are the questions substantially as asked:

What bird is the story about?  
 What did the magpie know how to do?  
 Did any other bird know how to build a nest?  
 Who came to see the magpie?  
 Why did they come?  
 When did all this happen?

Here are six questions, all on a dead level. The important facts are that the magpie could build a nest and the other birds came to learn how to do it. These are the facts to bring out.

2. *As a rule, avoid the question that can be answered by "Yes" or "No."* If such a question is asked merely to secure the expression of opinion, it should immediately be followed by "Why" or "How" or whatever word is needed to draw out the reason for the opinion expressed.

3. *Avoid the leading question.* Direct the thoughts of the pupil, but do not make thought unnecessary by suggesting the answer.

4. *Avoid the uninteresting question.* If interest is not aroused, thought is stifled. This caution should be kept in mind when testing silent reading, or when a story is being reproduced. A question relating to unessential details is uninteresting to a child because it diverts his attention from the point of the story.

5. *Avoid the question that is too broad.* The too broad question is the antithesis of the petty question. In the higher grades, after the pupils have had much training in expressing several related thoughts in a single sentence, one question would suffice for the

magpie episode: "*How came the magpie long ago to be a teacher?*" But this question is too broad for the second- or third-grade child.

#### TEACHING CHILDREN HOW TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

**Getting the point of the question.** The first step is to train children to get the point of the question they are to answer. Suppose this question were asked: "Which poem of Robert Louis Stevenson is your favorite?" The child should read the question thoughtfully and discover that it calls for an expression of his opinion of Robert Louis Stevenson's poems. The next step is for him to make up his mind.

**Answering the question in the most direct way.** These answers might be given:

The poem of Robert Louis Stevenson that is my favorite is "The Wind."

"The Wind" is my favorite.

My favorite Stevenson poem is "The Wind."

"The Wind" is my favorite Robert Louis Stevenson poem.

The child who gave the first answer tried to include all the words of the question. This habit often leads to long, involved answers. Train the pupils to answer a question in the most direct way. Which of the four answers above is the best?

One often hears in geography and history classes answers that obscure the thought by a multitude of words. Before answering a question, a child should take these steps:

Think what the question means.

Think what the answer is.

Think how to express the answer in the most direct way.

**Avoiding unnatural answers.** It was formerly the custom to require a pupil to answer every question in a statement. This habit results in stilted, unnatural answers. Remember

that all forms of expression that are permissible out of school should be accepted in school.

#### FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR INFORMAL CONVERSATION

**Informal conversation in connection with ordinary school subjects.** In a school that emphasizes the self-help way of learning, every recitation offers an opportunity for informal conversation. The history, geography, and nature periods are not used solely, nor even mainly, for reproducing the facts of the textbook. The children question each other, express opinions, and bring up additional topics for discussion. In all this work the teacher is alert to utilize every chance for strengthening the work in hand by requiring the pupils to think and to express their thoughts clearly. *Trying to express a thought clearly makes the thinking more effective.* This is one of the ways in which language is a profitable servant to all other subjects.

It has been suggested that one period be selected each day when the language of the pupils will receive as careful attention as during the language period. It is a good plan to appoint in advance one or more critics whose business it will be to watch for particularly good English and also for errors. Just before the close of the period the critics will report. On the following day a special effort will be made to improve the English in accordance with both the good and the weak features pointed out by the critics.

**The conversation lesson.** Other opportunities for informal conversation occur in discussing subjects that do not fall into the ordinary school categories. Many teachers find it difficult to secure class discussion of topics of general interest. They report that only a few children talk, and that these are usually the children who do not need the training. Other objections are that the children ramble from phase to phase of a subject, and little is accomplished.



The remedy lies in having both teacher and pupil prepare carefully for the exercise. To announce a subject at the beginning of a period and expect the pupils to enter at once into an animated discussion is idle. If the textbook does not provide for informal conversation lessons, the teacher should select in advance the phase or phases of the subject that are to be discussed, and frame definite questions that will direct the thinking of the children before they come to class, and guide their conversation after the discussion begins. The following lesson taken from a textbook will be suggestive. The children would study it independently before coming to class.

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### CONVERSATION LESSON

#### THRIFT

A common way of helping at home is by doing a share of the work. Today you will discuss other ways. The following questions will give you hints, but you need not hold to these. They will bring other things to your mind. What does *thrift* mean?

What things besides food do your parents buy for you? Do you know how much any of these things cost? Which wear out rather quickly? Does it make any difference how fast they wear out? How does taking care of these things help at home?

What can you do to make the following things last as long as possible: *shoes, dresses, jackets, mittens, gloves, carpets, books, hats*? What other things in the home need care to make them last longer?

In what ways can you take care of the school property? Does the school property belong to *you*? Does thrift matter at school? How?

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In class, each question should be answered promptly and briefly by several children. When no additional facts are brought out, pass to the next point.

Train the children to challenge politely any facts that they question, and to be ready to defend their own opinions. Incidentally, the pupils will learn to yield a point cheerfully when convinced that they are in the wrong.

At the close of such a lesson, it is a good plan to have the children state in a few short sentences the most important facts that were agreed upon.

In the higher grades, certainly in the sixth grade, the pupils may prepare the questions that are to direct the discussion. Or they may put on the blackboard several topics for discussion, appointing a pupil to open the discussion of each topic. When the children have reached this stage, they will often suggest methods of procedure that will astonish the teacher who does not realize how independent children become when responsibility is placed in their hands.

**Conversation lessons as a means of vocabulary growth.** Self-active children with original thoughts to express require a constantly growing vocabulary. Picturesque adjectives for describing, expressive verbs for making vigorous statements, appropriate synonyms for expressing shades of meaning — all these are a felt need, and are therefore sought for and used. The dictionary becomes an ever present friend.

**Conversation as an ally of projects.** Imagine that a seventh-grade class has selected as a project the making of a history of the early days of the city or town. It becomes necessary to read intelligently and select what is pertinent, to talk with aged persons who have good memories, to take notes of the information obtained, possibly to write to former residents of the town, to sift all information and select what is needed, to report and discuss in class, to decide on the form of the report, and to prepare it. This is a history project. What is its language value?

## FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. In what ways are informal conversation and composition mutually helpful?

2. What worth-while activities might your pupils carry on in the community? What methods would you employ to arouse the interest of the class to such a degree that they would voluntarily undertake a project having a definite purpose?

3. Select an interesting paragraph within the comprehension of your pupils and frame the questions you would ask to secure its reproduction in the question-and-answer way. Change the questions to meet the needs of a somewhat younger class. Change them once more for pupils maturer than your own.

4. What exercises can you invent for securing a motivated exchange of written questions and answers among your pupils?

## FOR READING AND STUDY

## THE ART OF QUESTIONING

BAGLEY. *The Educative Process*. The Macmillan Company.

HORNE. *Story-Telling, Questioning, and Study*, Chapter II. The Macmillan Company.

MONROE. *Cyclopedia of Education*, Volume VI, "Questioning." The Macmillan Company.

## PROJECTS

KILPATRICK. *The Project Method*. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.

See also the list on page 42.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### COMPOSITION STANDARDS AND MEASURING SCALES

#### WHY COMPOSITION SCALES ARE NEEDED

**The unreliability of individual judgment.** In an earlier chapter reference was made to a study based on several thousand compositions collected from cities and rural communities in thirteen states. Several of the purposes of the study were achieved, but in one important particular the compositions failed to furnish the desired information.

Each teacher was asked to select from the compositions of the entire class five which in her judgment represented average ability for the grade concerned, two that were above average, and two that were below average. It was suggested that in schools having two or more classes of the same grade, the teachers coöperate in selecting and classifying the compositions, thus increasing the reliability of the results. Although only three groupings were requested, and the grading was to be based wholly on the judgment of the teacher, it was hoped that the six or seven hundred compositions from each grade would afford reliable data for a set of grade standards. This did not prove to be the case.

The widest variation of judgment prevailed. Some teachers magnified the importance of mechanical matters, and ranked as above average compositions that were good as to form, but devoid of ideas. Others ranked as above average compositions that were rich in thought and in evidences of individuality, but were full of errors in spelling and punctuation. In fact, there was not enough agreement as to what constitutes satisfactory work in a given grade to warrant the use of the compositions for establishing grade standards.

This is by no means an exceptional experience. One might infer that if the teachers had been considering the same set



of compositions, greater uniformity of judgment would have resulted. But even when a set of compositions are graded by a considerable number of teachers, the same wide variation in judgment appears.

In an article on "Setting up Targets" in *The English Journal* for September, 1919, the author, S. A. Leonard, relates how thirteen teachers rated thirty compositions selected by a principal as the ten best, ten median, and ten unsatisfactory. Not one of the compositions was considered satisfactory by all the readers; three compositions were rated as satisfactory by seven readers, while six other readers considered the same compositions as unsatisfactory; one reader considered but three of the compositions as passing, while two passed twenty out of the thirty. This evidence of the untrustworthiness of the unaided individual judgment proves the necessity of reliable standards and tests if compositions are to be rated with the fairness to which the pupils are entitled.

#### KINDS OF COMPOSITION SCALES REQUIRED

In the sense in which the word is here employed, a *scale* is a graduated measuring instrument. At least two types of composition scales are desirable. The grade teacher needs a scale whose units are compositions actually written by pupils of the same grade as her own. The principal or supervisor needs a standardized scale that may be used all along the line.

#### MAKING GRADE COMPOSITION SCALES

The method of scale-making here described has been found effective. It is simple and may be used wherever a number of teachers of the same grade can conveniently work together.

**Preparatory work.** Before beginning the coöperative work of scale-making, each teacher should prepare herself for the task. Here are some things it pays to do:

1. Keep clearly in mind the grade composition objectives as outlined by the textbook or by the course of study. Regard these objectives as targets at which the children will be taught to aim. Make your teaching *specific*, and not general.

2. Compare the compositions of your pupils with those written by children of the same grade in other schools in the community. If the comparison is unfavorable to your pupils, strengthen the weak spots discovered.

3. Compare the compositions of your pupils with compositions regarded as standard in other places. A book like Mahoney's *Standards in English* is invaluable for this purpose. If the compositions of your pupils do not measure up to these minimum standards, emphasize composition work for a time.

4. Develop your judgment by criticizing compositions minutely. Break away from general descriptive terms — good, excellent, fair, poor, and the like — and note in precise terms the merits and the defects of each composition.

5. Compare the compositions of different pupils, and rank them in accordance with their merits, noting definitely why one is better than another.

**Making the scale.** Let us imagine that a fifth-grade scale is to be made. The first step is to collect a large number of compositions written by fifth-grade children. Preferably these should be one-paragraph narratives of personal experiences. This will insure for the scale units of the same general type. Some teachers prefer to use compositions on the same subject written at a specified time.

The way in which the compositions shall be rated in making the scale will be determined by the way in which the scale is to be used by teacher and pupils. So difficult is it to rank a composition from every point of view that it seems desirable to rate form and content separately. This plan makes it necessary for the scale to be so constructed that each unit composing it shall have the same rating for both form and content. The following method of procedure will insure the production of such a scale.

For convenience in recording results, the compositions

should be numbered serially. Each teacher should then read all the compositions and classify them in accordance with the following suggestions :

1. Put in a group by themselves all compositions so unequal in form and content that these aspects would require different ratings. Eventually these compositions will be thrown out because they are unsuitable for a scale that is to be made up of units having the same rating for both form and content.

2. Throw the remaining compositions, according to their merit, into groups, five being a good number. Make no marks on the compositions, but record the numbers of the compositions in each group. *A* may be used for the best group, *B* for the next best, and so on.

When all the teachers have finished reading and classifying the compositions, they should work as a committee of the whole in making the scale. The following method of procedure is recommended :

1. Tabulate the results of the individual readings of the compositions.

2. Throw out at once any compositions on which there was little unanimity of opinion, and also the compositions that were not ranked because their form and content value were unequal.

3. Put each of the remaining compositions into the group designated by the largest number of the readers.

4. Select from each of these groups a typical specimen for the scale. Naturally, the specimen selected from each group will be the one that was assigned to the group concerned by the largest number of teachers. Should several specimens be equal in this respect, the compositions concerned should be read once more with a view to discovering which one is of most nearly equal merit in form and content.

5. Attach to each of the five sample compositions notes that clearly state its merits and defects.

These five compositions with the notes will form the scale. They may be numbered in accordance with their rank, beginning with the best, either by the first five figures or by the first five letters. Some teachers prefer initial

letters, as, for instance, *E* (Excellent) as the label of the best composition; *G* (Good) for the next in rank; *F* (Fair) for the next; *P* (Poor) for the next; and *U* (Unsatisfactory) for the poorest. While these terms are general, they are not objectionable when the good and the poor features of each composition are definitely listed.

A scale made in the way described may not have equal steps between its units, but it will be very serviceable. If the help of a statistical expert is available, the scale may be made a more exact measuring instrument. The reading list at the end of this chapter contains several references to accounts of the way in which groups of teachers have made their own measuring scales, some with the aid of an expert and one without such aid.

**The teacher's use of the scale.** As early in the year as possible, and thereafter at stated intervals, the teacher should compare a set of compositions with the scale, and rank each composition separately for form and content. It is not a good plan to average the marks. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link. The pupil should understand that his compositions have a form and a content value, and that form and content must improve hand in hand. Strength in both respects marks a strong composition; weakness in either marks a poor composition regardless of the quality of the other element. It should be the aim of each pupil to secure the highest possible rating for both form and content.

The use of the scale will reveal to the teacher the individual needs of her pupils and thus direct her effort into the channel where it is most needed. The results of successive tests will indicate improvement or the lack of it. If improvement is not manifested, it becomes the teacher's problem to discover the reason and to plan her work accordingly.

**The pupil's use of the scale.** A simple "home-made" scale like the one described can readily be used by the pupils.

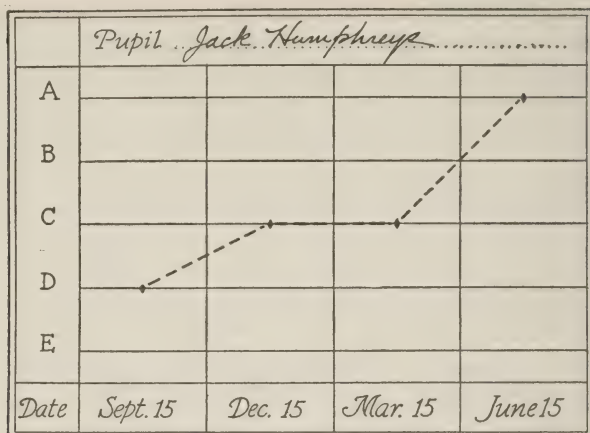


Make sure that they understand the critical notes appended to the compositions of the scale, and that they have much practice in estimating the worth of compositions before trying to use the scale.

A feasible plan is to divide the class into groups of four or five pupils. Each pupil of each group will rank the compositions of the group independently, and then the ratings will be compared and agreement reached. The teacher will frequently be called in to do umpire duty, and this gives her a good opportunity to point out matters that children sometimes overlook.

It is convenient for each child to have a copy of the scale, but its too frequent use should be discouraged. Some children in their eagerness to improve try to imitate the compositions of the scale, and this, of course, is undesirable. In other cases a too great familiarity with the scale breeds contempt. The pupils who have the scales only when they are to employ them for measuring purposes are likely to gain most from their use.

**Recording results.** A simple graph like the one on the following page may be prepared by the children themselves for recording the results of successive measurements. The letters *A*, *B*, *C*, *D*, and *E* refer to the five units of the scale, *A* being the highest. The record shows that the composition written by Jack Humphreys on September 15 was rated as a *D* composition; the one written on December 15 showed marked improvement; that written on March 15 had the same rating as the preceding composition; and that of June 15 climbed into the *A* class. It has often been noted that a particularly good composition has for its subject some unusual experience full of incident. Perhaps Jack Humphreys had enjoyed a trip in an airplane just before writing the June composition. Or is such marked improvement possible under ordinary circumstances? The teacher who



answers this question with "Yes" is the one who is likely to train pupils of the Jack Humphreys type.

The ultimate advantage to be derived from the composition scale will be determined largely by the use made of the time between measurements. The use of the scale reveals needs. It becomes the task of the teacher so to direct the self-help activities of her pupils that these needs shall be met.

#### STANDARD COMPOSITION SCALES

It is difficult and perhaps idle to predict the future of the standardized composition scale in the hands of the grade teacher. It may be that when teachers are better trained in both the theory and the use of the scales, and when the scales are improved, they will be more commonly and more effectively used than at present. The standardized scale in the hands of untrained teachers produces results as divergent as those noted at the beginning of this chapter. Unless a teacher is in a position to make a thorough study of the scale, and to be trained by an expert to use it, it is probably best for her to leave to others the task of administering it in her class,

getting from the expert all necessary information as to results and their significance.

To the principal, supervisor, or other administrative officer, the standardized scale is becoming a necessity, and its constant improvement is highly desirable. Some of the standard composition scales are listed below, as are also some books of importance on the subject of educational measurements.

#### DIAGNOSTIC TESTS AND DRILLS

It is not only in estimating the worth of compositions that the psychologist has come to the assistance of the teacher. There are now available tests that reveal the weak spots in a pupil's English armor and make it possible for the teacher to plan wisely for corrective work. Tests of this sort no teacher can afford to ignore. They are not described in detail because it is absolutely necessary that the teacher who wishes to use them get the material, study carefully all directions that accompany them, and use them exactly as suggested. A few are listed below. Since rapid strides in the refinement of testing material are being made, ambitious teachers should keep in touch with publishers in order that they may promptly be informed of the issue of new material.

#### FOR READING AND STUDY

The literature of tests is now so large that no attempt is made here to do justice to the subject. The purpose is rather to give under several heads a few references that will help a student to become familiar with the theory and the use of measuring scales in English.

#### BOOKS ON THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF TESTS

HINES. *A Guide to Educational Measurements.* Houghton Mifflin Company.

McCALL. *How to Measure in Education.* The Macmillan Company.  
(This book will meet the needs of the teacher who wishes to go very thoroughly into the subject of testing.)

MONROE. *Measuring the Results of Teaching.* Houghton Mifflin Company. (Read Chapter IX.)

## 278 SELF-HELP METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

- PRESSEY, S. L. AND L. C. *Introduction to the Use of Standard Tests*. World Book Company. (Probably there is at the present time no better book for the beginner, or for the teacher who has not time for an exhaustive study. The book has been made as non-technical as possible. Both general principles and special problems are discussed.)
- WILSON-HOKE. *How to Measure*. The Macmillan Company. (This is a clear and a simple treatise.)

### HOW COMPOSITION SCALES ARE MADE

- HOSIC. "Composition Standards in the Elementary School." *Seventeenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Part I. (This article tells how the teachers of the Parker School, Chicago, made a scale. The scale is included.)
- "The Essentials of Composition and Grammar." *Fourteenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*. (This article tells how the Harvard-Newton Scale was made.)
- WILSON, G. M. "Home-Made Composition Scales." *Elementary English Review*, September, 1924. (This article tells how a company of teachers worked under expert direction in making a scale from compositions collected for the purpose. The scale produced is given. The article is extremely suggestive.)

### STANDARDIZED COMPOSITION SCALES

- BALLOU. *Harvard-Newton Scales for the Measurement of English Composition*. Harvard-Newton Bulletin, No. 2. Cambridge, Massachusetts. (Explicit notes are attached to each unit of this scale, enumerating the merits and the defects of the specimen.)
- HILLEGAS. *A Scale for the Measurement of Quality in English Composition*. Teachers College, Columbia University.
- HUDELSON. *Hudelson English Composition Scale*. World Book Company. (This book contains clear directions for the use of the scale and for the help of scorers. It also gives norms and contains compositions for practice in using the scale.)
- LEWIS. *Lewis English Composition Scales*. World Book Company. (A scale for measuring narration and four scales for different types of letters.)
- THORNDIKE. *The Thorndike Extension of the Hillegas Scale*. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.



- TRABUE. *Nassau County Supplement to the Hillegas Scale*. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- VAN WAGENEN. *Van Wageningen English Composition Scales*. World Book Company.

## DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

- CHARTERS. *Charters Diagnostic Language Tests for Grades 3 to 8*. Public School Publishing Company.
- *Charters Diagnostic Language and Grammar Tests for Grades 7 and 8*. Public School Publishing Company.
- KELLEY-RUCH-TERMAN. *Stanford Achievement Test*. World Book Company. (This test includes language among other subjects.)
- STARCH. *Starch Punctuation Scale*. Public School Publishing Company.
- WILSON. *Wilson Language Error Test*. World Book Company. (This is a simple test designed to detect language errors.)

NOTE. The graph on page 276 shows the ratings of four compositions whose form and content were of equal merit. Whenever a pupil's compositions have different ratings for form and content, he should use two lines, one continuous and the other dotted. It then becomes his task to give especial attention to the feature that has the lowest rating, and to strive to make his work uniformly good. He will be interested in bringing the lines together on his graph.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### GRADE OBJECTIVES IN ENGLISH

#### INTRODUCTION

THE grade objectives listed in this chapter concern only those phases of English work that are discussed in this book. The objectives in reading, literature, and spelling can easily be added by a teacher who wishes to include all the English work of the school.

#### FIRST-GRADE OBJECTIVES

To talk freely and without self-consciousness about outside interests and all school activities; to tell orally a story of two or three short sentences in a way to interest classmates or other audience; to express thought by action as well as by words as a basis for dramatization; to add to the vocabulary new words demanded by projects and expanding interests in general; to overcome, or at least to begin the struggle against, a few of the errors of usage commonly made in the class, games being the principal means employed.

To write own name; to write single words to serve as labels or for some other genuine purpose; to write one short statement based on an oral lesson, and to begin it with a capital letter and end it with a period.

#### SECOND-GRADE OBJECTIVES

Building on the power acquired in the first grade, to talk with greater fluency and confidence in connection with projects, all other school activities, and all interests outside of school; to tell to an audience a story of a personal experience in several clear sentences; to dramatize a simple story; to reproduce a short story in response to questions; to add to the vocabulary new words made necessary by growing inter-

ests; to continue, if necessary, the struggle against the common errors of usage begun in the first grade, and to overcome several other common errors by means of games and simple drill sentences.

To write address and parent's name; to continue to write labels, if they are needed; to write a story of two or three short sentences, the story having first been developed in an oral lesson; to begin each sentence with a capital letter and end it with a period or a question mark, as required; to use capital letters in writing all names and the pronoun *I*.

#### THIRD-GRADE OBJECTIVES

To begin to study independently with the help of the textbook.

To talk freely with classmates in planning projects and in other school activities, asking and answering questions, stating plainly the reasons for suggestions made, and defending these suggestions, if necessary. To improve story-telling by consciously taking the following steps, which would be successively developed: choosing one phase of a subject; telling facts in their right order; using good beginning sentences; describing simple objects by making clear word-pictures of them.

To use the ears as well as the voice in order to become good listeners, good critics, and good interpreters of oral directions. To increase sentence power and vocabulary by means of dramatization, conversation in class, and reproduction in which some of the author's words are consciously selected to be used. To overcome a few of the common errors of usage by daily sentence drills, games, and an occasional language drive.

To learn how to copy and to arrange a paragraph well on paper; to improve written work by taking the following steps: copying a team note; writing a note from dictation;

writing an original note; copying a team story of one paragraph; writing a short original paragraph after oral discussion. To learn the significance of the paragraph form; to use capitals and such marks of punctuation as are required by the written work.

It is assumed that all lines of work begun in the third grade will be continued as needed. The objectives for the remaining grades are in the main limited to new features.

#### FOURTH-GRADE OBJECTIVES

To improve story-telling, the stories remaining short, by giving more attention to beginning sentences that at once enlist the interest of the audience; by explaining how things are done or made; by choosing good titles and strengthening the sentence sense by distinguishing between sentences and titles that are not sentences. To enlarge the vocabulary by consciously adding to it useful new words encountered in every line of work. To establish a closer relation between language and all other school subjects, with special attention to the use of short, clear sentences, and answering questions in a simple, direct manner.

To write a one-paragraph story with due regard to sentence structure and vocabulary. To use the full letter form, and to appreciate the significance of paragraphs in letters; to use capitals and marks of punctuation as required.

To criticize simply and directly own work and that of classmates, having in mind the aims set before the class; to consider criticism as a means of helpfulness.

#### FIFTH-GRADE OBJECTIVES

To assume responsibility at the beginning of the year for determining what work the class as a whole and individuals in the class do well, and what work needs strengthening; to strengthen the weak places by self-help means, among which



the following should be prominent: review; making and using notebooks; using the textbook whenever in doubt; using the dictionary for the spelling, the meaning, and the pronunciation of words. To use the eyes more keenly for detecting mistakes in written work and for enriching experience by observing closely what is going on in the environment.

To improve story-telling by learning to stick to the point; by using direct quotations; by using exact rather than general terms; by learning to organize paragraphs; and by adding force and variety to sentences through combining thoughts in various ways.

To begin the more technical study of the sentence by learning the functions of the subject and predicate, the lessons being motivated and taught inductively.

To learn to use quotation marks in written work, and such other punctuation as is required by the work done. To write motivated letters as the principal form of written work, but not to the exclusion of one-paragraph compositions.

#### SIXTH-GRADE OBJECTIVES

To learn to study with independence, using the textbook in every possible way, including the mastery of the Index. To increase the power of self-help by training the ears to become sensitive to oral mistakes; and by learning to use a library through the card catalog.

To improve story-telling by additional training in description; by explanation of more complex activities than in the lower grades; by trying to convince; and by distinguishing definitely between describing accurately what is seen and telling a story about what is seen.

To improve social letters by avoiding useless beginning and ending sentences, and by considering the interests of the person addressed. To write simple, motivated business letters. To understand the paragraph both in oral and written compo-

sition, and to make simple outlines. To write a paragraph that will be practically free from common mistakes.

To learn the parts of speech wholly as a means of more intelligent attack upon errors of usage.

To organize class teams and assume responsibility; to use the team organization as a means of promoting socialized activity.

Before the close of the year to stand before the class and give a short talk in clear sentences and well-selected words on some subject of interest.

Since under the junior high school system the close of the sixth grade marks a transition period in the pupil's life, a summary of sixth-grade objectives is here appended:

To tell a short story in correct, well-chosen language, either orally or in writing; to write a friendly letter that is absolutely correct as to form, and that will interest the person to whom it is addressed; to write a simple business letter in approved form and in clear, concise language; to be sufficiently interested in the environment to find much material for thought and for use in language exercises; to attack intelligently bad habits of speech and fight them to a finish; to work with others in close, friendly intercourse in useful projects; and to be able to stand before an audience and talk for three or four minutes on some interesting subject which has been mastered by using every available means of self-help.

#### SEVENTH-GRADE OBJECTIVES

To inventory English stock at the opening of the year and to set up definitely formulated aims to be attained; to continue this practice throughout the year. Further to improve composition, oral and written, by learning more definitely how to choose a subject, and how to limit it; by giving special attention to opening and closing sentences; by learning how

to classify ideas; by securing force and variety through varying the forms of sentences, inverting subject and predicate, and placing modifiers near the words they modify.

To broaden and strengthen the social activities of the class by means of projects that demand initiative and careful planning. To work in committees.

To learn the inflections of the parts of speech that are involved in common errors of usage, and to attack these errors anew by applying when necessary the rules of grammar that are concerned; to use grammar wholly as a means of self-help either in composition or in overcoming bad speech habits; to understand simple, complex, and compound sentences as a means of improving sentence structure.

To form, state, and maintain opinions, and to talk without self-consciousness when addressing the class or other audience.

#### EIGHTH- AND NINTH-GRADE OBJECTIVES

Still further to improve oral and written composition by building up a more mature vocabulary; by more consciously learning from models studied; by using synonyms and antonyms; and by applying with more determination all that has previously been learned. To write a greater variety of motivated business letters; to write simple reports and editorials.

To extend the social activities of the class by means of class organization, committees, and the like; to assume increased responsibility for conducting all class activities.

To continue the study of grammar purely as a self-help activity; to learn the more difficult inflections and apply the knowledge in an understanding way to the correction of errors of speech; to learn to analyze sentences as a means of testing own sentences, and for help in interpreting the more involved sentences encountered in reading.

To learn methods of self-education that can be applied when school days are over.

To stand before the class and make a five-minute address that was prepared by using every available help to secure the facts; by classifying the ideas and making an outline; and by carefully arranging the details under each topic so that the speech will have a suitable introduction, a main part that gives the facts in the right order, and an appropriate ending.



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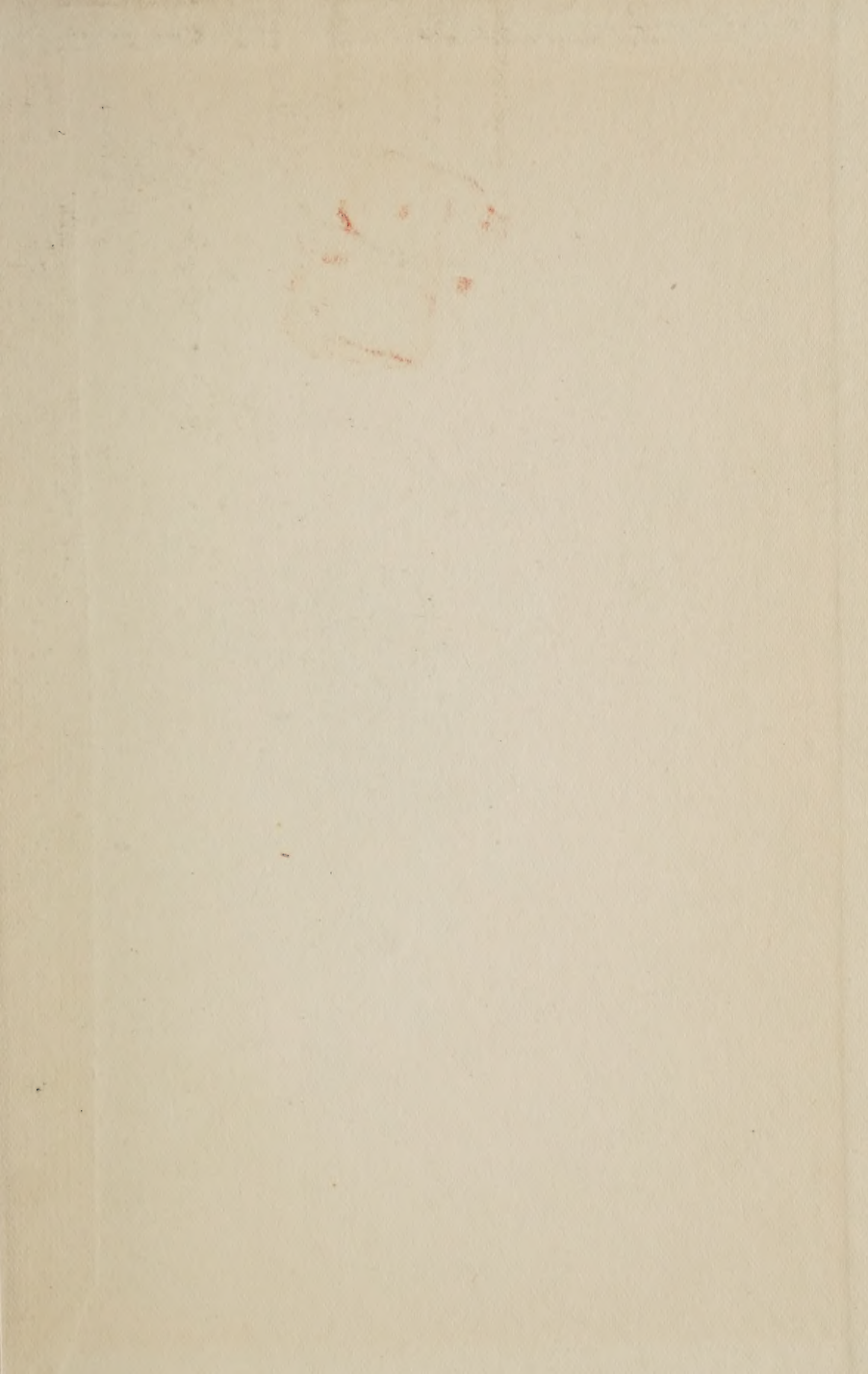
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